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AN ARAB TELLS HIS STORY

A STUDY IN LOYALTIES

By EDWARD ATIYAH

JOHN MURRAY,
ALBEMARLE STREET,
LONDON W.1

To

C. R. LIAS AND R. W. G. REED

TWO GREAT ENGLISHMEN WHO, AS HEADMASTERS OF AN ENGLISH SCHOOL IN EGYPT, HAVE COMMUNICATED TO MANY GENERATIONS OF ARAB BOYS AND OTHERS THE BEST THAT ENGLAND HAS TO GIVE

IN AFFECTIONATE GRATITUDE

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INTRODUCTION

I AM a Syrian Christian born in the Lebanon and educated at an English school in Egypt and Oxford. My childhood was spent between Syria and the Sudan in the years immediately before and during the last war. My working life has been spent in the Sudan, where for nearly twenty years it has been my duty to interpret to the Government the thoughts and feelings of the educated Sudanese. During all these years I have also kept in close touch with Syrian life and with the Arab national movement in general.

In my personal life, as well as in my work, I have experienced in different forms and through many fluctuations of feeling the effects of the impact of Western civilization, and particularly British political influence, on the Arab world—the stimulus it provided, the resentments it provoked and the reconciliation and synthesis that can be achieved in the situation it has created.

This book is an attempt to describe this experience and its background in the form of an autobiography. My justification for writing it is that the subject has not been dealt with before, at least not from the intimate angle of personal experience, and that its frank treatment from this angle may help the British and the Arabs to understand each other better than they have done hitherto. That they should do so in the world which is going to emerge out of this war is a matter of considerable importance to both.

The term "Syria" throughout the earlier part of the book is used to signify the geographical and historical entity of that name, of which the Lebanon is a part. Since 1919 Syria and the Lebanon have been two separate states, and in the latter part of the book the term "Syria" is used specifically to denote the state of Syria.

E. A.

February 1946.

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CHAPTER I

SYRIA BEFORE 1914

FOR Europeans and those who have developed on the lines of European Civilization it is difficult perhaps to realize how an individual grows up in a country where there is no sense of nationality,

When from your earliest days you hear but one language spoken—your own language; when all the stories you read or listen to in your childhood, from the nursery stage onward, are in that language, and are chiefly about people who have lived in the same country as you, in similar houses to your own, eaten the same sort of food, and worn the same sort of clothes; whose circumstances and habits, everything they said and did, sounds as familiar to you as your own Teddy Bear—when later you go to a school where the teachers are of the same breed as yourself, and you read about kings and queens and heroes who have lived before you in this same land, which you feel is your own, so that you begin to acquire a sense of tradition—when finally you go to a public school four hundred years old, and from it to a university double that age; when you come in for your share of the intellectual and moral legacy of some ten centuries of accumulated kindred lore, equally inherited by all or most of the people you know—when gradually your sense of moral proprietorship extends over a king, a government, an army, a navy, a history, a language, a church, a land, and a thousand other things more felt than perceived, which in some subtle way you share with thirty or forty million other people to the exclusion of the rest of the world—when you have undergone all these influences, and issued into the world, a homogeneous product, labelled Englishman or Frenchman or German, you will find it difficult to understand the character of a land where none of these influences existed. The reactions of an individual brought up in such a country will sound strangely unfamiliar to you though, given the circumstances, not unintelligible.

If ever there was a country in which every conceivable influence, divine and mundane, physical and moral, inherent and extraneous, militated against national unity and the formation of a patriotic sentiment, that country was Syria before 1914. A country of some two million and a half inhabitants, representing two of the three great monotheistic religions of the world and all their myriad conflicting offshoots. Sunni Moslems, in a vast majority; Shia Moslems; Druses; Christians—these last not united, as might be supposed, in face of the Moslem majority, but subdivided into mutually hostile churches or rather camps: Maronites, Roman Catholics, Greek

Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Anglicans and Presbyterians; all fanatical or, at the mildest, regarding one another with aversion. And even when there was neither fanaticism nor aversion, there was always the tendency to regard yourself as under a religious rather than a national denomination. You were never a Syrian, one of the two and a half million inhabitants of Syria, but a Moslem, or a Roman Catholic or a Protestant, and regarded the others as aliens.

Given favourable conditions—counter-forces of sufficient strength—religious differences can be forgotten, or disregarded in an all-embracing national consciousness. But there were no such counter-forces in Syria. Rather there were a hundred forces all tending to accentuate these religious divisions and shape them more and more into political issues. For this religiously heterogeneous population was under the dominion of an alien Islamic Power, in whose fate the alien Christian Powers of the West were deeply interested. And since these Powers represented different creeds, a very curious situation ensued. The Moslem population leaned towards Turkey; the Roman Catholics and Maronites developed strong French sympathies; the Greek Orthodox identified themselves with Russia, and the Protestants drank tea in the afternoon and were called "Ingliz."

In their innocence the Christian sects of Syria came to look upon their respective co-religionists in the West as their devoted champions, who would mobilize fleets and armies against the infidel Turk to save or avenge a Syrian Christian. The British Consulate was considered to be the stronghold of the Protestants; the Greek Orthodox Patriarch was supposed to be able to bring down the wrath of St. Petersburg on the head of the offending Turk if necessary, while the Maronites were regarded in a more especial sense as the cherished protégés of France. Once or twice in the past the Maronites had indeed received help and protection from the French (notably at the time of the famous massacre of 1860), while Russia, in her numerous quarrels with Turkey, had often posed as the protector of the Greek Orthodox Syrians. But the attachment of these sects to the European Powers had a psychological basis deeper than any feeling of gratitude or consideration of material benefit.

Living in the midst of a preponderantly Moslem population, subject to the domination of an alien Moslem power, devoid of any sense of tradition or pride of nationality, the Christian sects of Syria came to derive from this largely one-sided association with the nations of the West a sense of importance that ministered to their vanity, and mitigated the humiliations of their inferior position. They liked to wallow in the luxury of the feeling that though a Moslem power ruled over them, the great nations of the world, so vastly superior in every way to their decrepit suzerain, were Christians like them. Gradually a romantic attachment grew out of this feeling. The Syrian Christians came to

adopt, psychologically, the nationality of their respective European co-religionists. They adopted it jealously, fervently. They became *plus royaliste que le roi*, idealistic lovers and hero-worshippers of the West. I remember my father telling the story of a Greek Orthodox Syrian peasant who wept bitter tears over every Russian defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, and who, for years, refused to ratify the humiliating peace that brought it to an end.

This process was greatly stimulated by the advent of foreign religious missions and the founding in Syria of foreign schools and higher educational centres in the 19th century. The unifying influence of the Arabic language, of a common speech and a common literature, was almost completely negatived by the introduction of these alien and divergent educational influences—American, English, French, Russian, German, which corresponded roughly to the religious divisions of the native population. The Roman Catholics and Maronites went to the schools of the different French monastic orders, Jesuits and Frères, and imbibed French culture saturated with Roman Catholicism; while the Protestants flocked to the English, American and German schools, where they assimilated Anglo-Saxon lore. The Moslems and Greek Orthodox were divided between the two, though on the whole preferring English and American to French schools, as being less fanatical. Of Russian schools there were not many, those that existed being patronized by the Greek Orthodox.

And so the attachment of the Syrian Christians to the European nations, originally inspired by fear of the Moslems and the sense of inferiority resulting from subjection to Moslem rule, was strengthened, developed and given definite shape by the infusion into Syria of Western education. The population of Syria became spiritually more heterogeneous than ever it was before. By acquiring a share of the intellectual heritage of Europe, the Syrian Christian found and began to appropriate that sense of tradition which he had lacked before. True he had inherited the language and literature of the Arabs. But the Arabs were mostly Moslems, and Arab civilization was at that moment a dead civilization that might be studied with interest, but could not give its devotee that sense of tradition which results from an unbroken connection with a living past.

Hero-worship! It is as such that the general attitude of the Syrian Christians to the European nations before the war, and more particularly towards the close of the 19th century, can best be described. The military and naval prowess of Europe; her reputation for culture and scientific advancement; the manifestations of her mechanical greatness —all these factors, with the halo of remoteness and novelty glowing about them, wrought their potent influence on the impressionable Syrian mind. Everything European came to be regarded with almost religious veneration, and to be compared with its Oriental counterpart

much to the detriment of the latter. European morals, habits, ways of living, dress and general behaviour were idealized as belonging to a superior race. From this idealization of Europe and Europeans to the direct copying and assimilation of European civilization was but a short step for a very flexible people remarkable for its powers of assimilation, and unhampered by any formidable traditions.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of this lack of national consciousness was the absence of all aspiration towards political independence. The Syrian Christians hated Turkish dominion, and looked forward to being freed from it—not to freeing themselves from it, and setting up an independent Syrian state, since in such an event the Moslems would be in a crushing majority, and the Christians would, as they thought, be still oppressed and persecuted. They looked forward then to being freed from Mohammedan suzerainty by one of the European Powers, who would oust Turkey and rule Syria in her place. This would not be an alien dominion. No! For were not these European Powers Christians like ourselves, our brothers in Christ? Would they not uphold and advance the downtrodden Christian, who would feel at home with them, who would no more be the underdog, but rather triumph over the humbled Mohammedan, have his own back after centuries of fear and oppression?

CHAPTER II

FAMILY—GRANDFATHERS

OUR family has a chronicle going back some three hundred years. Early in the 19th century two Atiyah brothers travelled from Suk-el-Gharb (a village in the Lebanon just above Beyrouth) to Constantinople, to obtain a Firman from the Sultan of Turkey for the building of a Greek Orthodox church in their village. This Firman, which is still in existence, is our first family document; and when the brothers returned triumphantly with it, the village women sang heroic songs in their praise. The church was built, and the first priest, himself an Atiyah, started a family chronicle which was carried on by his successors. From this chronicle it appears that the family progenitor had lived in the interior of Syria, and had two sons—and that on his death the two brothers had drifted towards the coast, one eventually settling down in the neighbourhood of Suk-el-Gharb and the other in the plain of Akkar, beyond Tripoli. Thus two branches of the family evolved simultaneously at different places, and for a long time knew little of each other.

The Akkar brother proved to be the more prolific of the two, his descendants founding in time a large village—Beino—which to this day consists entirely of Atiyahs, though for the sake of convenience sub-titles have been devised for some of the less distinguished ramifications. These Beino Atiyahs developed a strong independent clan spirit, and gave a lot of trouble to the Turkish Government. Living away from town influences, they retained till quite lately the rough and warlike qualities of the past; they bred horses and were themselves fine horsemen.

In me for the first time the two branches of the family were reunited, for my father came of the Beino Atiyahs and my mother of the Suk-el-Gharb branch.

Both my grandfathers were outstanding personalities of their generation, particularly so my paternal grandfather, Yusef Atiyah. He was the most profoundly genuine Christian I have ever known. The intensity of his belief and his courage in serving it were definitely on the heroic scale. He succeeded in coming within a hair's breadth of martyrdom; the fault in failing to achieve the crown was certainly not his.

He must have been something of a puritan by nature, for by the time he was seventeen years old he had come to disapprove strongly of the practices and beliefs of his sect, and resolved to become a Protestant. On hearing of his intention his family, having failed to dissuade him,

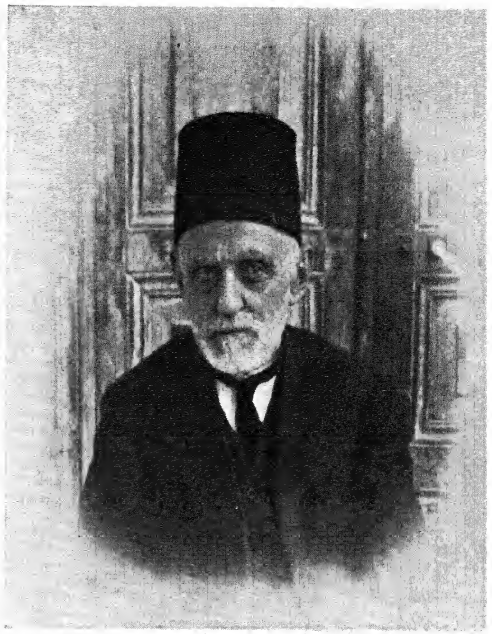
turned him out of the house, and the villagers boycotted him. On a wet winter evening, he walked several miles to the house of the nearest American missionary, told him his story, and was received into the Protestant Church. He was subsequently ordained, moved to Beyrouth, and became a famous preacher. In time he made peace with his family, and returned to his village, where the Protestant Church had gained a few more adherents.

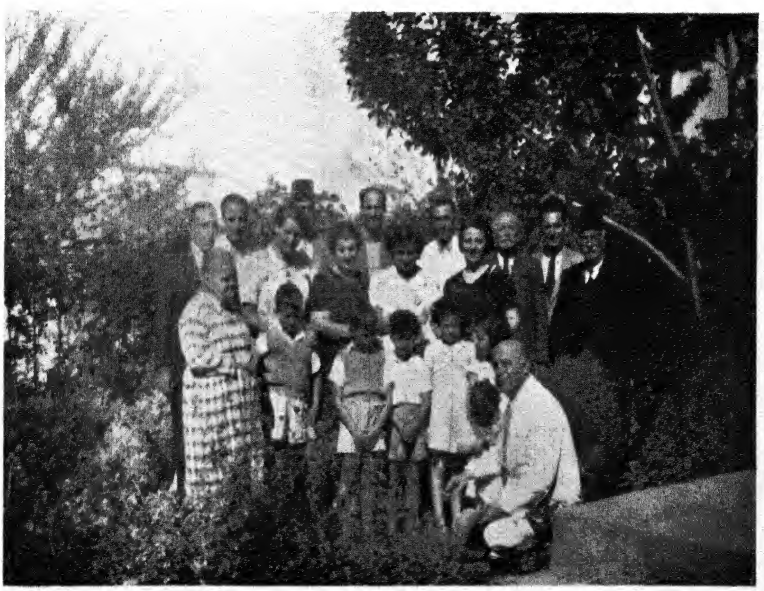
Story-telling at winter evening gatherings was an old custom in the village; almost every night there would be a gathering at one of the prominent houses, and in between drinking wine and eating grilled chicken, the older men would tell stories, old tales of love and heroism, of Antar and Abu Zeyd el Hilali, and other epic characters. My grandfather, seizing the opportunity afforded him by this practice to improve the souls of his visitors wrote himself a few moral and religious tales in simple language, and read them aloud at these gatherings. One of these stories was about the conversion of a Moslem to Christianity, and there were dialogues in it setting out the superiority of Christianity to Islam. Subsequently this story suggested to my grandfather the idea of writing a series of books on this theme for propaganda purposes. These books became very popular with the missionaries, one of whom sent a collection of them to the well-known Orientalist, the late Sir William Muir. The latter liked them and expressed the desire to translate them into English. My father, then twenty years old, was sent to Edinburgh to discuss the matter with him, and the books were translated. But the author's identity was kept a close secret, for it was deemed that what he had said in them, if he was found out by the Turkish Government of that day, would secure him a place at the bottom of the Bosphorus.

The secret was well guarded till the outbreak of the War, or rather till America's entry into the War. One of the American missionaries, fleeing the country in haste, left his library and private papers behind. His house was searched by the military authorities, and among the things found was one of my grandfather's books, inscribed with his name. The guilty writer had been found at last and his trial was ordered before the Military Tribunal in Beyrouth. My grandfather, nearly ninety then, but in full possession of his faculties, was living at Tripoli. The Turkish Governor, who had known and respected him for many years, sent for him and explained the position. His instructions were to send my grandfather under escort to Beyrouth, but he asked to be allowed to go there on parole, and the Governor consented.

At that time the Military Tribunal in Beyrouth was an object of terror to the civil population; it was dealing the death sentence right and left; few appeared before it and did not have to mount the scaffold.

When therefore a little old man presented himself there one morning





YUSEF ATIYAH

A GROUP OF ATIYAHS AT THEIR ANCESTRAL VILLAGE IN THE LEBANON

[6]

without an escort, and apparently without fear, and said that he was Yusef Atiyah, coming for his trial, he was not believed at first. It was suspected that he was an impersonator taking the real man's place in order to give him time to escape. My grandfather gave the names of friends who could identify him, and his identity being accordingly established, the trial opened. The defending counsel, and some of the witnesses, tried to hint that the accused was beginning to dote, and that his statements must not be taken seriously. My grandfather, detecting this intention, emphatically denied the allegation; he was, he affirmed, in possession of all his faculties, and realized the full meaning of everything he said. His interrogation was very short.

"Did you write these books?"

"Yes."

"With what object?"

"With the object of enlightening my Moslem brethren."

"Supposing you retain your freedom, will you write any more books of this kind?"

"If God gives me strength and inspiration."

The case was referred to Damascus, while my grandfather was detained in prison for two months. He was summoned then to appear before the Tribunal again. He went thinking that the scaffold had been erected for him. "You are acquitted," announced the president of the court. "Do you mean," asked my grandfather, "that I am a free man, that I can go back to my house and family?" And when the president said "yes," he calmly went down on his knees in full court. The president, mistaking the gesture as one of gratitude to himself and the court, cried out in offended modesty, "Istaghfirallah, istaghfirallah—No, no, I beg you, don't."—"No," said my grandfather, "this is not to you; it is to Him above," and he prayed aloud.

I also remember one or two other stories about him. When my father got the title of Bey, my grandfather was told that he would have to address him on the envelope as "Sahib el izzat," roughly "His Excellency." Now, the word "izzat" happens to be also one of the qualifications of the Deity. Was he to blaspheme then? Yet it was the proper thing to write. Very well, he would do it, but only under protest, with an explicit reservation—so he wrote: "Sahib el izzat (and izzat is for God alone) Dr. Selim Bey Atiyah."

No matter how sore-tried, he would not lose his temper or say a harsh word to anybody. The utmost liberty he allowed himself in giving vent to feelings of irritation, when worried to distraction by a naughty granddaughter, was "May God take you away from me to your mother in peace." And this heroic spirit was lodged in a frail and apparently ailing body, which had several times threatened to succumb in early and middle life. When my father first went to boarding-school, my grandfather, then fifty-five, wrote to him exhorting him to be a man,

and take good care of himself in the world, as " I fear my boy that my sun is about to set." It was, however, in spite of this apparent decline, a pretty stubborn sun, for it managed to remain hovering over the horizon for another forty-three years; and when it finally set my father had been dead for six months.

My other grandfather, Ibrahim Atiyah, was not cast in heroic mould; he was a gentle, kindly, naïve man, who thought ill of no one and was liked by everybody. Although pious and well versed in religious matters, he was more of a scholar than a divine, and spent his life quietly, reading, writing and teaching. He was one of the first men in Syria to learn English, and this qualification, together with his marriage to my grandmother, who was a protégé of the British Mission in Beyrouth (having fled thither with her sisters and mother from the interior after the massacre of the Christians by the Druses in 1860), destined him for a life-long connection with the Mission, as a teacher and inspector of schools. It was he who for over forty years taught new missionaries Arabic. Through this long connection with English men and women he came to develop several English characteristics, some of which were quite unknown among the Syrians of his generation, like the habit of drinking afternoon tea, which (as hinted above) was considered symbolical of Anglo-American civilization, taking walking exercise, and a general regularity and method in his life. I knew him much better than I knew my paternal grandfather, for in my childhood we always lived with him when we were in Syria. I can still see him walking every morning, with his slow, regular invariable step, under his large black umbrella, to the Mission School—or sitting quietly (he never seemed to make any noise, so gentle and slow and careful were his movements) in his study, drinking tea and reading, very much like an old Oxford don—or sitting at the head of the table at dinner, his eyes shutting from time to time, his jaws moving with a slow mechanical motion, reducing every mouthful to pulp before swallowing it.

When my mother was a young girl, the president of the British Mission in Syria was one Mr. Mott, a very rich, but extremely original gentleman, who took a great fancy to her, always calling her Miss Asma and virtually adopting her for several years. He used to take her often to the cemetery, show her the site of his projected grave, lie down to make sure that the measurements were correct, then jump up thundering, " Death, where is thy sting; grave, where thy victory? " He would go up to my great-grandmother, an old doting woman huddled up in a corner, and say to her, " Will you go in through the narrow gate or the wide gate? " and she would answer in good faith, and with the choice which common sense obviously commended, " No, please, sir, I should like to go in through the wide gate." Whereupon he would shout scandalized, to my grandmother, " Alia, come and see; your mother wants to go in through the wide gate! "

One day Mr. Mott met my father, then a young man studying at the American University of Beyrouth. " I have a nice bride for you," he said. " Do you know Miss Asma ? " My father did not, and it was not till a year later that he met her for the first time. Later he remembered Mr. Mott's sound advice, and realized that he had unwittingly acted on it.

The family connection with the British was subsequently strengthened by my father and uncle joining the Sudan Government, soon after the Battle of Omdurman.

I was born at Suk-el-Gharb in 1903. My mother took me to the Sudan to join my father when I was two years old, but though I have a few faint and disconnected memories of our life at Wadi Halfa, where my father was stationed then, it was at Beyrouth two or three years later that I first became conscious of life in any coherent manner.

CHAPTER III

BEYROUTH

CHRISTIANS *versus* Moslems: this was my first notion of collective human relationships. To my mind at the age of five or six the world consisted entirely of Moslems and Christians in antagonism to one another—two natural inevitable groups, as natural and inevitable as the world itself, to one of which—the weaker but more righteous one—I belonged. In like manner I suppose the American negro boy sees the world in black and white; in like manner the workman's boy sees it in terms of workman and employer. There can be little in a kitten's political consciousness save the all-absorbing relationship between cats and dogs.

From my earliest days I was hearing talk about "Christians and Moslems." This was one of the chief and most recurrent topics of conversation among the Christians of Beyrouth at that time, and especially among the men of the older generation. Whenever my grandfather had visitors, the conversation would sooner or later veer to that subject: the downtrodden Christians—the egregious tyrant Abdulhamid, who hated and persecuted us, and massacred Armenians also because they were Christians, and who in his leisure moments, when he was not persecuting us or massacring Armenians, had his own people sewn up in sheets and sacks and dropped into the Bosphorus. And from such general comments they would pass on to specific details, tell anecdotes—of a poor Christian muleteer, who was nearly flogged to death, because his mule happened to knock over a Moslem's stool in the market place—of a Moslem merchant who swore at the Cross and Gospel in everybody's hearing in the middle of the town, and was not challenged by any of the Christians present. And they would indulge in reminiscences of the Christian massacre by the Druses in 1860—of how the Druses treacherously induced the Christians to surrender their arms, and then led them into a courtyard and slaughtered them like sheep, how a few Christians managed to secure arms, with which they wrought individual deeds of great valour—how finally France intervened and landed troops, though by then the massacre was over.

The memory of that massacre remained for a long time fresh in the minds of the Christians. The year "Sixty" became a landmark by which people dated events before and after it. No other event of such magnitude had happened in the recent history of Syria. Some of the older people who came to see us had witnessed it themselves. My grandmother and her sisters had lost their father in it.

And I would sit and listen to these stories, and to many others—

some about the past, and some about the present, incidents of the week, and therefore more vivid to my mind. A Mohammedan murdering a Christian, or a Christian mudering a Mohammedan—an endless vendetta, one long record of animosity, suspicion, aggression and retaliation, and a haunting sense of insecurity. It was not considered safe for anyone to walk alone at night in Beyrouth at that time, or even to open the door before making sure who the visitor was. In this vendetta, both the Moslems and Christians had their war-leaders, a group of recognized champions, young men proud of their courage and physical prowess, known as " Abadies," and organized into a regular camp. If a Mohammedan murdered a Christian, the Christian champions would plan and execute the necessary revenge; and vice versa.

In the days just before I was born the leader of the Christian champions was a man called Osta Bawli—a corruption of his original Greek name, Costi Paoli. He was a redoubtable champion, loved and admired by the Christians, dreaded by the Moslems. Every Christian in difficulties with the Moslems or with the Turkish Government was his protégé; every Christian murdered was sure to be avenged by him or by his lieutenants; Christians in danger of being arrested sought refuge with him. He concealed them, gave them money, helped them to flee to America. When he walked out he was surrounded by a veritable body-guard of lieutenants, wearing Caftans, and belts holding daggers and revolvers, and the bravest of the Moslems feared him. . . . At last, the Moslems got him. He was stabbed in the back one night, and died. By the next morning the staggering news had spread throughout the Christian community of the town. Osta Bawli dead! Osta Bawli murdered! His funeral was the occasion of a fervent demonstration by the Christians; it might have been that of a great captain or statesman. For once Greek Orthodox and Protestant, Maronite and Roman Catholic forgot their differences—forgot even their fear of the Moslems and of Abdulhamid, and turned out to a man, to pay their last tribute, in warlike fashion, to the fallen hero. Roofs and balconies and windows were crowded with women and children, while the streets swarmed and seethed with men. For several hours before the coffin was brought out, frenzied crowds gathered round the house, singing anti-Moslem songs, imprecating Turkey and the Sultan, while Abadies walked up and down, vowing swift and terrible revenge. The audacity of the Christians on that day reached such a point that the refrain of one of these songs, which they sang at the top of their voices in the street, described the Sultan, the terrible Abdulhamid, as a frightened mouse. And then just before the coffin was shut, a smartly-dressed young Christian, with a rose in his button-hole, and a scented handkerchief in his pocket, who had not uttered a word throughout, but stood aside calm and with set expression, walked up

to the coffin, bent over the dead man's face and kissed it; and those standing near heard him whisper something. Osta Bawli was then carried on his lieutenants' shoulders, through the streets of the mourning city and buried with a people's lamentation.

A few weeks later the smartly dressed young man stepped out of a cab outside a Moslem tobacconist's shop, ordered a box of cigarettes, and while the man was getting it, whipped out his revolver and shot him and two other Moslems standing nearby. The next instant he had vanished. Thus was Osta Bawli avenged in accordance with the code of the time and place. It did not matter a straw if the three men killed had anything to do with his death or not; it was enough that they were Moslems.

For many years after his death Osta Bawli was a household word among the Christians of Beyrouth; his exploits and the memorable day of his funeral were vividly remembered, and dramatically described by those who had witnessed them. His story, which I heard many a time from my grandfather and father, thrilled me, as also did the majestic sound of his strange name, which I pronounced as one word, Ostabawli, filling my mouth with its voluptuous volume, rolling it out like a phrase of epic verse. He was one of my earliest heroes, and, I think, the only non-European hero I had in my childhood.

By the time I was eight or nine I had developed, or rather inherited, a definite outlook, common to all the Syrian Christians of that time, a feeling of aversion for the Moslems and Druses, whom I had learned to consider as our natural enemies. I felt that there was something alien and uncouth about them, that in some strange way they were not ordinary people like us. How indeed, could they be, when they were not Christians, did not know the truth about God, and were all going to Hell—all, except one or two, for I once heard my mother speak well of a certain Sayed Khaled, and maintain that it was absurd to think that somebody as good and upright as he was would go to Hell. My grandfather agreed, and to my great surprise, Sayed Khaled was definitely placed in Heaven. There were these exceptions, but they were very few, and did not mitigate the general impression. For if a Moslem or a Druse was considered so good as to stand a reasonable chance of entering the Christian paradise, he, in a way, ceased to appear as a Moslem or a Druse, was detached from the group, which remained as alien and uncouth as before.

These feelings, my aversion for the Moslems, and impression of them as an alien people hardly sharing our humanity, were not entirely due to fear or the feeling that they had a different God from ours. They were partly derived from the mystery that surrounded Moslem women and the domestic life of Moslems in general . . . I would see these women walking about, completely enveloped in black, face and all. I would hear them whispering in little groups, and wonder what

strange things they talked about, wonder how they could see their way through the black veil that showed nothing of the face. I would see them vanish into their mysterious houses, with the high latticed windows, that showed nothing of the interior, and wonder what they looked like and did inside. And this impression of grim mystery, which the sight of these bogey creatures and their occult lives produced on my mind was strengthened by what I heard of their lives—of the Harem and its horrors; that each man had several wives in the same house, who hated and fought and poisoned each other, and that the husband could send away any of his wives whenever he liked, keeping the children to himself, so that they never saw their mother again. In every way then these Moslems appeared to me as removed from us by a formidable barrier—sharing with us only the appearance of human beings.

In a milder way I was conscious of the differences among the Christians themselves. I knew that there were different sorts of Christians—Christians who were in the right (i.e. Protestants) and Christians who were in the wrong, whose priests wore funereal clothes, large bushy beards, and tall black hats, from which they seemed inseparable, as though they had been born in them—uncouth creatures, whose hands, if you belonged to their flock, you had to kiss, so different from the perfectly human ministers of our Church. I once, out of childish curiosity, attended Mass in the Greek Orthodox Church at Suk-el-Gharb. I felt oppressed and homesick in that strange atmosphere of incense and images and burning candles and mournful chantings in what seemed to me a foreign language—all forming a lugubrious contrast to the familiar and unadorned proceedings of our Presbyterian Church.

So important were religious and sectarian denominations in Syria at that time that I, a child of eight or nine, would on seeing a person for the first time, or hearing of one, naturally ask whether he was a Protestant or otherwise; and my feelings for him would partly, to say the least, be determined by the answer I got. My playfellows were all, with one or two exceptions, children of Protestant parents. The exceptions were Greek Orthodox boys, and in these rare cases private friendship overcame group prejudice, although when I got to be fond of a boy who was not a Protestant, I secretly wished that he was one.

To my fear of the Moslems, which quite darkened my young life in Syria, another and more pervading kind of fear was soon added. I had for some time been receiving religious instruction, in the form of Sunday School lessons and Bible stories from my mother. I also used to attend family prayers when we were living with my grandfather in Beyrouth. I would sit very attentive at these solemn functions and take in every word of what my grandfather read from the Bible, and of the prayers with which he concluded, and in which he always laid

stress on the enormity of our sins, which deserved, and but for God being so very kind and good would surely receive, the most terrible of punishments. I would surreptitiously open my eyes, kneeling beside my mother, and steal a look at her and my grandfather and aunts and the servants, but especially at my grandfather, with his white soft hair and gentle expression, who was so very kind to everybody. Were we all sinners? The maid probably was one—we never got on well together—but my grandfather, surely, he could not be a sinner, or my mother either! I refused to believe it. I would ask my mother when she was putting me to bed whether she and grandfather and a few other people were not exceptions to this rule of universal sin, and she would assure me that they were not. Another thing that had horrified me was the knowledge that we must not only fear and obey God, but also love Him, love Him more than anybody else. "He who hath loved father or mother more than Me hath not deserved Me." When I was six years old I could have given you chapter and verse for this. I tried very hard but I couldn't love Him more than my mother. And so I became terribly afraid that I didn't deserve Him. My burden of original sin weighed heavily on me. I was unhappy. I hated Beyrouth.

And then one morning the prospect of a different, happier life gleamed before my eyes. My mother told me that we were soon going to Omdurman to live with my father. I had no idea at all what life there would be like, but it would be something new, and then I should not feel afraid; the English would protect us from the Moslems. The prospect of a long and exciting journey by trains and steamers thrilled me. I began to feel superior to my friends; they did not go anywhere, but always lived in Beyrouth. How dull and monotonous were their lives—how could they go on living like that? In a few weeks' time I would be off, on a big ship, leaving stale old Beyrouth behind me, exploring new worlds, having wonderful adventures—with luck perhaps shipwreck on a desert island—and they would be just living their same old life, going to school every day, having the same old lessons.

CHAPTER IV

OMDURMAN

I HAVE a confused recollection of big boats and trains, and friends meeting us in Cairo, and a new kind of bread, and lights in glass balls that you turned on with a switch, and a new kind of Arabic, in which things were called by unfamiliar names, and sleeping on the floor of a sleeping-car compartment, and crossing the Nile at night in a gloomy launch, at the bottom of which there was some water which made me think that it was sinking—and at last on a late evening of November, 1908, we arrived at Omdurman. I had been ill on the way, and had to be carried home from the station. The excitement of arriving at a new place was completely killed in me partly by my illness, and partly by the character of the place itself. The house into which I was taken, our new home, was a low gloomy building of raw brick walls whose colour on the outside was the natural colour of mud. It stood on the perimeter of a sandy waste, dotted with a few stunted and arid-looking shrubs—a dismal aspect. The rooms were lit by candles from which a feeble trembling light emanated that left the ceiling and upper part of the walls in semi-darkness; shadows too lurked in the corners. I was filled with a sense of gloom, unrelieved save by the presence of a tame gazelle, which was brought into the room for me to see before I went to sleep.

Nor did brighter prospects reveal themselves as the days succeeded one another. I was confined to my bed in that unattractive room for well over a month, in an old-fashioned black enamelled iron bed, gilt in one or two places, with four posts at the corners, supporting a mosquito-net, that reminded me of hearses I had seen in Beyrouth. Four dreary walls enclosing nothing that one could call pretty, and through the windows the deadening prospect of other mud walls and sand, not clean shiny yellow sand, but dirty-looking brazen gravel. And medicines, castor-oil, powders, pills, enemas, vomiting, morning and night, in endless hateful monotony. The toys I had I did not care for. I remember in particular a bulldog, a tiger and a white woolly sort of animal, whose species I am not sure of now. I tried to amuse myself with them, but how? They were not things of beauty so that the sight of them could be a joy for ever. I gave them names, endowed them with personality, and in defiance of all realism, tried to make them clothes, but I failed in my tailoring efforts, and soon lost all interest in this unconvincing menagerie. Somebody gave me a pack of cards. It was the first I ever saw, and it delighted me. I liked the smooth shining surfaces, the firm sharp edges, the bright colours and com-

plicated designs. It was a little art museum to me, and when somebody taught me how to build a house with it, my enjoyment reached great heights.

Things were much better, of course, when I was well again and left my bed, but even then my interests were not many. From time to time my mother would " hire " Sudanese boys to play with me (there being no white children available), but these were rare occasions, and I was left largely to my own resources, which were greatly limited by the fact that I could not read yet. I had a few children's books, but apart from the pictures they were a closed treasure for me. Later my father bought me a football and I used to collect Sudanese boys round the house in the afternoon and play with them.

There was, however, one big compensating advantage—I was far from the religious animosities and fears of Beyrouth, and I felt the difference. I felt the atmosphere free and light around me. I knew that the Sudanese were Moslems, but unlike the Moslems of Beyrouth they did not seem to be our enemies—nobody talked of Moslems and Christians. Sudanese people visited us, they all seemed kind and friendly—our servants were Sudanese and I played with Sudanese boys. I did not think of them as Moslems, but just as Sudanese, and there was no enmity between us and the Sudanese.

The same difference applied to Syrians of other sects than ours here. We no longer lived in a sort of Protestant colony. There was no longer any question of so-and-so being a Greek Orthodox or a Roman Catholic —we were all just Syrians. We even had Druse friends who came often to our house. I remember asking my mother at first if they were real Druses, the same that had massacred the Christians in the Year Sixty, and her saying, " Yes, dear, but that was a long time ago."

But if my fears of some of God's worshippers were greatly allayed now, my fear of God Himself, which had started in Beyrouth, came on again and steadily grew into a tormenting obsession. Ideas of sin and repentance and punishment were particularly acute at night. I would stay in bed wide awake, assailed by doubts, possessed of a paralysing gnawing fear, dissolving into a cold sweat. I would review my thoughts and deeds of the past day, searching through them with neurotic thoroughness, and discovering therein a hundred scarlet sins—envy, anger, lapses from strict truthfulness, and many other such enormities. Very often these were of my own creation. Perhaps when my mother asked me if I was hungry, and I said " Yes," I was not telling the truth. Did I really feel hungry, or was it only my desire to have that extra cake ? Perhaps that cake was the Devil's device to tempt me to tell a lie, and I had fallen into the temptation. Would Christ ever forgive me ? I would summon up all the evidence at my disposal tending to prove His kindness and the likelihood of His forgiving me, if only I repented and never did it again. But no sooner would I reach this

comfortable conclusion than the legions of doubt would rise again in a hundred shapes. Perhaps I could not repent; perhaps I'd do it again. More misery, more sweat. And all the time there was the appalling knowledge that God knew my every thought. I imagined Him, I almost saw Him, sitting up there, looking into my mind, noting in an enormous book everything I thought and felt. Being myself obsessed with Him, I naturally attributed to Him a reciprocal obsessive interest in me, and as far as I was concerned the universe resolved itself into one tormenting relationship between me and the Deity, in which Christ's loving kindness was altogether overshadowed by the terrifying character of His Father.

A development of these morbid struggles was the desire to seek relief by confessing my sinful thoughts to my mother, and obtaining her assurances of divine forgiveness. These confessions, at first desultory instances, soon developed into a regular nightly practice. Every night on being put to bed, in great fear and agony I would disclose to her my reprehensible thoughts, desires and deeds of the past day. The confession would for the moment afford me great relief. To my surprise my mother would treat the matter lightly, and I would feel much like a man who had gone to the police to confess a murder and been told, " That's all right, old chap, don't worry about it." But no sooner would my mother leave the room, than fresh doubts and fears would assail me. Had I really confessed everything? Had I not concealed certain fundamental facts that made all the difference in the world between innocent actions and sins of the deepest dye? Perhaps I had forgotten to mention this or that particular point necessary to my incrimination. The feeling of a heavy burden would return. No, I cannot go to sleep like this; my mother must know all, everything. I would then call her and make another confession, filling in the omissions. Sometimes I would have really concealed certain facts out of fear at the first confession, like a patient who suspects a dread disease and seeks the doctor's assurance to the contrary, but does not tell him all the symptoms. But more often there would be really nothing fresh to confess. Exhausted by these mental torments I would eventually drop to sleep.

A time came when my confession embraced minor offences of a purely secular nature, as well as religious and moral delinquencies. If I played with my nose in public, or said an impolite or vulgar word, I would for hours be haunted by the memory of the shameful deed, until bedtime came and I could confess it. Some rich friends of ours lived at Khartoum in a large sumptuous house, a palace compared to our humble and unattractive abode. I used to go there to play with the children from time to time. Once they had a children's tea-party, and after tea we had some fine Jaffa oranges. Fruit, at that time, was a great rarity in the Sudan; we had only once had oranges at home and

these were so small and withered that the servant called them camel-dung. The expression had stuck in my mind, and when the lady of the house now asked me if we had ever had oranges at Omdurman, I answered that we had, and spontaneously qualified them by reproducing the servant's expression. The words had scarcely left my mouth when I was covered with humiliation; the vulgarity of the expression, which had not struck me before, came home to me in a flash amidst my refined surroundings. I immediately realized that I was not supposed to talk about such things as camel-dung in public. Camel-dung! The words seemed to fill the air, loudly proclaiming my disgrace. I sat quiet for the rest of the afternoon, brooding in great misery over my shame, thinking that I had for ever ruined my reputation, that I would never again be asked to go and play with the children, and that the terrible news would spread far and wide over the earth. And I must confess this to my mother; I could not go back and pretend to be innocent, as if nothing had happened during my visit, when really such a dreadful thing had happened . . . Camel-dung . . . but was it really as terrible as all that? What was wrong in saying a harmless thing like that? Camel-dung was neat, compact, clean-looking, not like cow-dung. Perhaps my offence was not as rank as it had seemed at first, not serious enough to be confessed; surely I would forget about it in time. I had almost cheered up by the time I got home, but when night came and the quivering light of the candles began to dance on the bare walls, and my mother came to undress me for bed, my sense of guilt began to stir again, and cold perspiration gathered on my forehead. The tormenting shadows of the afternoon had risen before my eyes, swaying their accusing, unappeasable shapes; I realized that I could not go to sleep with that terrible secret on my conscience, and I confessed it.

CHAPTER V

A BOMBARDMENT AND THE UNION JACK

WHEN the Turco-Italian war broke out in 1911, my mother and I were again living with my grandfather in Beyrouth. The sympathies of the Christian Syrians were entirely on the Italian side. I was then just old enough to take notice of such an event, and from what I heard came to take a keen interest in it. Our detested sovereign Turkey was at war with a Christian power, and naturally I wanted the Christian power to win. I would sit and listen to the war news being discussed in privacy (for no one dared discuss it in public) by my grandfather and his friends, and exult over the defeat of the Turks. And then occurred the most exciting event in my young life—an event which at once appealed to my sense of adventure, and filled me with the utmost thrills of triumphant joy.

An Italian naval squadron came to Beyrouth in the course of the War, and after a short bombardment sank two Turkish destroyers at anchor in Beyrouth harbour. It was a day in early February. The Italian cruisers were sighted on the horizon at dawn, and the news rapidly spread over the city. I happened to go out of the house soon after breakfast, on an errand to the grocer's, and soon gathered that there was something unusual in the air. There was a stir and a hum in the street. People who should have been at their work in the town were coming back, walking hurriedly, as if trying to reach their homes before something happened. Some of these stopped for a second here and there to impart a hurried information to a friend or acquaintance whom they chanced to meet proceeding on his normal way. Shopkeepers were standing outside their shops, communing quietly with one another, stopping new arrivals from the town to ask questions in an undertone. Some of them who had just opened their shops were closing them again, turning customers away. On everybody's face there was an expression of suppressed excitement, of fearful anticipation. At the grocer's shop I heard one or two words from which I began to understand what was happening, or about to happen. I hurried back home and at the gate met my grandfather, who had been out too and brought with him definite news. An Italian fleet was coming to bombard the Turkish boats in the harbour. It was not likely that the town would be molested, unless the land batteries were to fire at the Italians. In any case the safest thing for us to do was to go to the British School, where we should be under the protection of the Union Jack. My grandfather had seen the Headmistress, and she had told him that she had received instructions from the British Consul to hoist the

flag over the School, in case the Italians were to bombard the town.

A few minutes later my mother and aunts had shut up the house, and we were all hurrying to the British Mission Girls' School, say rather to England's protective bosom for sanctuary, and as we approached it, this school, which I had hitherto looked upon as a school and nothing more, appeared to me as an inviolable fortress, defended by the great might of England, more inviolable than any sacred place of the Middle Ages, defended by the Holy Ghost, could have seemed to those who sought refuge within its walls. I could not have felt safer if I had seen the British Fleet at anchor around its walls. I imagined the Italian admiral spotting the Union Jack as he scanned the horizon with his telescope, and shouting out to his men not to fire in that direction on pain of their lives.

And were we not privileged creatures, I and my mother and my grandfather and aunts, to be admitted into that sanctum, when so many other people were left defenceless in their homes, or were fleeing from the town altogether, seeking refuge inland? Those were the Moslems, whose fear was quite different from ours on that day. We were only afraid of being molested accidentally, by a stray shell that should be unable to distinguish between Moslems and Christians. But we did not fear any intentional injury from the Italians, for they were our friends, since they were Turkey's enemies, and were coming to humble her under our very eyes.

But the Moslems felt differently about it. The Italians were their enemies, the enemies of Islam, since they were waging war on the Caliph. Moreover, it was in consonance with the mentality of those days to imagine that the Italians would raze the town to the ground, or land a force and put the inhabitants to the sword. Hence the Moslems were in a state of panic. Large numbers of them took to cabs and carts, and fled towards the interior. We could see them scuttling away—cartloads of children and women all in black, and men, fleeing from the wrath of the Christian Power. One spectacle impressed me particularly. On our way to the school we met our milkman, a Moslem called Yusef. He was hurrying past, a milk-pail in his hand. He did not take any notice of us. He had a look of panic in his eyes, and was murmuring audibly: "El Yom Yomak Ya Rasul Allah"—to-day is your day O Prophet of God.

Safely installed within walls protected by the Union Jack, within hearing of the Italian guns doing their glorious work, I exulted over the defeat and terror of the Moslems. It was our turn at last to feel exultant; theirs to tremble and flee. The Christian God had after long ages heard his people's prayers.

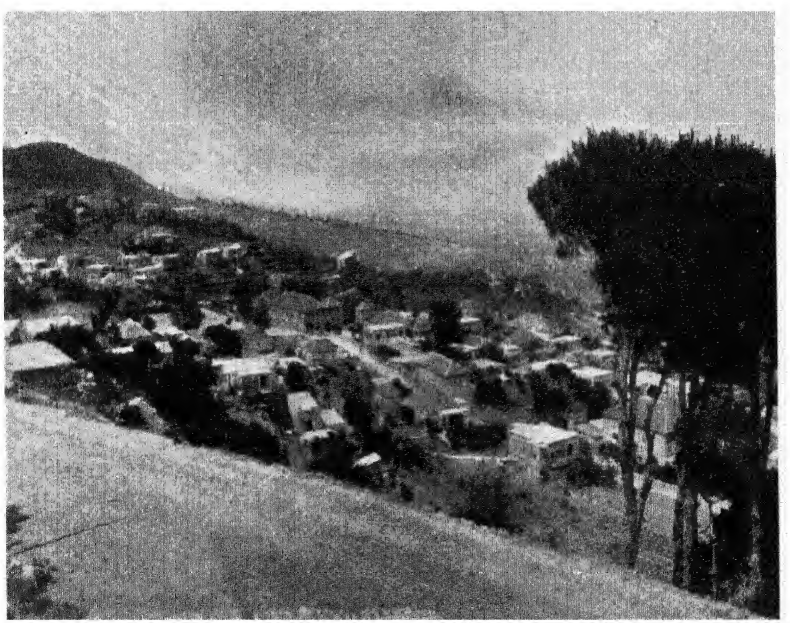
The bombardment was over by noon. In the evening we went back home and began to hear the details of the action—how the Turkish

destroyers were hit, how they sank, how their men perished, details over which I gloated with a sense of triumph unsoftened by any feelings of pity for the slain and wounded, or for their people. And yet I am sure that had I heard of a dog killed in the street outside our house, and his end had been described to me with half that wealth of detail, I should have cried.

CHAPTER VI

THE MOUNTAIN

THE day after the bombardment my mother and I left Beyrouth for the mountains. For my mother feared that the stirring up of religious animosity caused by the Italian attack might result in open friction between the Moslems and Christians. In such times the Lebanon was a place of safety, as its population was almost entirely Christian, and its political status was a somewhat privileged one, it having always enjoyed a large measure of autonomy and been placed, since the massacre of 1860, under the formal protection of the European Powers. In the Lebanon therefore the Christians felt much happier than in the cities of Syria, which were under direct Turkish rule and where the Moslems were in vast majority. I was conscious of this difference, and always looked forward to the annual summer move from Beyrouth to Suk-el-Gharb with tremendous joy, and to the return autumnal move with corresponding depression. This, of course, was partly due to the physical difference between the two places. The ascent from Beyrouth to the heights of Mount Lebanon seemed to me like a material version of the promised move from earth to paradise. You got up at dawn and saw Butros, the muleteer, under the stars, strapping the heavy luggage, mattresses and bags and boxes, on his large mules with the polished haunches and the little bells that tinkled as the animals stamped about and Butros pulled and wound his ropes round their bellies. Then as the mules, fully packed, with Butros and the other muleteers sitting astride their buttocks, set off to thread their mysterious way to the Mountain by the narrow and stony paths which only mules could take, you and the rest of the family, with the small luggage, got into a carriage—it had to be a strong carriage with two powerful horses, for it had to climb three thousand feet in ten miles—and the coachman cracked his whip and you were off, leaving Earth behind you. You left Earth at sunrise and long before noon you were in Heaven. You left a dirty decrepit city, remarkable for its lack of attractive architecture, its sordid streets and the odours that exuded from their miasmal gutters, and rose rapidly in a zigzagging line into the freshness and beauty of mountainous nature. And as you rose, the blue Mediterranean beyond the dingy town rose with you, and the blue horizon stretched out wider and wider every minute, circling in a majestic sweep that seemed to embrace the world, and making the vast blue face of the sea look like a solid perpendicular wall supporting the blue dome of the sky and losing itself on either side in mists of blue infinity; while on the opposite side, fresh slopes and



CULTIVATED TERRACES IN THE LEBANON
SUK-EL-GHARB, LEBANON

summits above disclosed themselves at every turn—slopes of bare fresh-looking red earth, and summits adorned with the graceful pine; and everywhere, in the cosy valleys beneath, and on the summits above, small villages of red-roofed houses appeared, surrounded by vineyards and groves of olive trees—and the large air that enveloped this beautiful world became fresher and cooler every minute, more and more saturated with the aroma of the pine, and filled with the chirpings of the mountain-cricket.

Peasant boys and girls would meet you at every village, offering at infinitesimal prices baskets of fresh-gathered fruit—apricots and plums and mulberries, and, for the thirsty, icy water from some neighbouring spring in a red pitcher, its outside sparkling with pearly moisture. And at last you arrived at an attractive-looking clean village, where there were no foul smells, or bogy women in black. And you ran along the village street feeling free and safe, intoxicated with the air and the joy of arrival, calling at the butcher's and greengrocer's to greet the friends of the summer before, stopping at the spring by the big mulberry tree below the road to drink in cupped hands a draught of limpid water coming straight from the heart of the mountain; then you met other children and ran up the hillside with them to play among the pines and olive trees.

Usually when we went up to the mountains for the summer we rented a house, but this time we did not. It was still winter, and the houses had not been prepared for the season. Besides, there were only the two of us, and my mother did not like the idea of our living in a house alone through the remaining dreary part of the winter. So we lived in a couple of rooms in the house of a peasant family we knew, and shared for several months their homely country life.

The villages of the Lebanon at that time had a peculiar existence, varying immensely from winter to summer. Their native population was very small. Suk-el-Gharb, one of the most flourishing of them, numbered only some two hundred inhabitants. These were chiefly small landowners, peasants and shopkeepers. In the winter they lived a typical peasant life, cut off almost completely from the outside world. When the weather permitted a diligence travelled to Beyrouth and back, carrying a few letters, and one or two passengers on urgent business bound. The daily train from Beyrouth to the mountains stopped at a neighbouring town some three miles from Suk-el-Gharb.

In the summer, however, these villages were transformed into flourishing holiday resorts, accommodating as many as a thousand holiday-makers each, and displaying the latest fashions and features of the town.

So far I had only known these villages in their urban summer garb. It was a novel and thrilling experience for me to live at one of them in the winter.

The peasant family we lived with consisted of a man, his wife and five children. Their activities were numerous. They had a small piece of land which they cultivated; they kept cows and poultry; and they bred the silk-worm—wonderful occupations all to my civic mind, especially the last. I soon became one of the family, and threw myself heart and soul into these diverting labours. I used to go out with the children to help their father when he ploughed, or when they took the cows to graze in the neighbouring valley. I picked with them mulberry leaves for the silk-worm, helped them to mince the leaves, and in the evening—most exciting experience of all—went in with them to feed the worms. These were kept on large round wicker trays ranged on shelves round the walls of a large room, kept dark and warm, in what was to me an atmosphere of fascinating mystery. We went in carrying lanterns and saw the fat smooth caterpillars swarming and twisting in their basket beds, nibbling away at the leaves, growing longer and fatter every day and bigger with the burden of their strange and thrilling destiny. And when we had finished the labours of the day I and the younger children would sit round the father and listen to wonderful tales of magic, while far below, wrapped in the coast mists, lay Beyrouth with its sordid hates and fears.

CHAPTER VII

ADOPTION

WHEN the Balkan war broke out, following close on the heels of the Italian war, my enthusiasm for the cause of the Christian states was unbounded. I had tasted blood that day the Italians sank the Turkish destroyers; and my sharpened appetite clamoured for more, and savoured it keenly when it got it. I could read now, and got the news daily from my grandfather's paper. My mother did not like me to read much on account of my weak health, so I used to read stealthily whenever I had the chance, and in a short time I knew everything about the war which the papers could tell me: the names of the battles, the number of Turkish prisoners, the number of Bulgarian troops, and many other such details. I sympathized particularly with the Balkan states, because I knew that they had once been under Turkish rule themselves. But it never struck me that the Syrians could or should follow that glorious example. Why should they, since England, or at the worst France, was bound to come one day and turn Turkey out of Syria?

One day during the war, a French naval squadron visited Beyrouth. Many people went down to the harbour to see it, and when the ships' bands played the Marseillaise the enthusiasm of the crowd on the shore broke out in cheers. One man waved his cap in the air and shouted: "Long live France who is coming to protect us." I was not present when this incident occurred, but I heard it told to my grandfather by a friend the day after its occurrence. The two agreed that it was tactless of the man to have said so in the hearing of so many Moslems, and then proceeded, as usual, to discuss the future of Syria under European auspices.

And while some went on living in the hope of future betterment at home, waiting for Europe to deliver them from Turco-Moslem oppression, others—perchance with a greater share of Phoenician blood in their veins—packed their kits and went forth in quest of new homes in the different parts of the Earth. To North America they went, in tens of thousands, and to South America; to the Phillippines, Australia, West Africa and Egypt, where British rule had been recently established. Economic motives, no doubt, played their part in urging this flow of emigration. Syria was a poor country and the fabulous reports of easy-flowing gold in the New World and Australia made their appeal. But the chief urge was the desire to find a free life even at the cost of parting with home and family. For if in leaving Syria the Syrian Christian had to sever a few sentimental ties, he also shook off

a weight of heavy shackles. The rapidly receding land he was leaving behind as the ship carried him away to new worlds might have borne him and his fathers on its bosom, and provided him with the trees in whose shade he had played as a boy, but it had also subjected him to many fears, injuries and humiliations to which he was glad to bid farewell.

It is significant that the Moslems did not participate to any appreciable extent in this emigration movement. For one thing, the ruling power in Syria was a Moslem power, whereas the outside world to which the emigrants went was a Christian world, where Moslems would be subject aliens; for another, the Moslems were more conservative than their Christian compatriots, and had not, on account of their religious exclusiveness, come much under foreign influences yet.

The emigrants proper, who left Syria in large numbers, were naturally of the illiterate or barely literate class. But apart from these mass migrations, there was another process of exodus afoot—a thinner, though just as regular stream of well-educated Syrians, in many cases professional men, leaving Syria in quest of wider and freer fields of work. For every Syrian who meant to stay and work at home when he had finished his education, there was one who looked forward to going abroad. Indeed you first tried to find work outside Syria and only stayed at home if you could not go away.

The British occupation of Egypt and the subsequent conquest of the Sudan opened up a tremendous field for the Syrians. They flowed into Egypt as collected water flows through a breach in a dam—in hundreds and thousands—traders, doctors, writers, seekers of government employment or indeed of any kind of work.

Our own immediate family (i.e. the offspring of my grandparents on both sides) was largely represented abroad. My paternal grandfather had three sons in all, and they were all outside Syria. My father, a doctor, had gone to Egypt and joined the Sudan Government. His second brother, a pharmacist, had done the same, whilst the third had gone to the United States at the age of twenty without any professional qualifications, but with a small capital with which to start some kind of business. They had four sisters, of whom one was teaching at a school in Egypt. The other three lived in Syria, but when the eldest of them died, all her children (their father having died before) went to America, and when later my grandfather died his youngest daughter went there too.

As for my mother's family, its history is almost a repetition of the one just told. She had two brothers, the elder of whom left Syria as soon as he had completed his education and joined the Sudan Government, and the younger went to America to study engineering, but developed consumption and died soon after his return. Of five girls, she and her youngest sister were married to men living in the Sudan,

and another married a young man about to sail for the United States, and left with him soon after their wedding. The other two remained unmarried at home. Thus out of two families of fourteen brothers and sisters only four girls lived in Syria, while the remaining ten had made themselves new homes abroad.

From my earliest days, therefore, I was hearing of relations and friends living in various parts of the world; and of others thinking of leaving Syria, and leaving it to settle down in other countries. And I myself was year after year leaving Syria in my mother's company to join my father in different parts of the Sudan. No attachment to the soil of Syria, no idea that Syria was the natural home of the Syrians, ever developed in my mind. Rather it seemed that the best thing people who had been so unfortunate as to be born in Syria could do was to leave it as soon as they could, and adopt some other country. Many Syrians had already under the influences of a European education, and through community of religion with the Western nations, adopted spiritually some European nationality or other while they were still in Syria. Now thousands of Syrians were adopting a foreign soil as their home.

In this curious contra-national atmosphere it was my lot to adopt England—not the soil of England, for I did not see that till I was nineteen years old—but everything else, the spirit and prestige of England: her kings and heroes, armies, fleets and victories; her history and literature, and all the things that were lacking in my own national background.

At first it was passionate, primitive hero-worship, from a distance, based on the stories and reports I heard of England's greatness, stories and reports that wove themselves in my mind into an epic of legendary magnitude.

When I was six years old an English friend of my father's in the Sudan gave me as a present an illustrated child's book of English history called *Our Island Story*. I could not read English yet but I revelled in the pictures, of which I chiefly remember one of William the Conqueror mounted on a towering steed. On being told that that gentleman had conquered England I was greatly dismayed. Had England then ever been conquered? I turned away from the picture of the alien tyrant, with feelings of wounded national pride, until the mysteries of the Norman Conquest were explained to me and I understood that modern England was as much Norman as anything else.

By asking for explanations about the pictures and pressing for details I got my mother and aunts to tell me a good deal of the story in Arabic, I listened enraptured to the tale of glory—Agincourt, the Armada. Trafalgar, Waterloo and their respective heroes passed in dazzling procession before my mind's eye. The glories of the British Empire, of English power and dominion over one-quarter of the World (marked

red) stretched out gratifyingly on every map I saw. With one part of this empire I was personally acquainted. I was indeed living in it most of the time, and could see from our house the British flag flying over the Government headquarters, that flag which had protected us from the Italian shells sinking the Turkish destroyers in Beyrouth harbour; I could see British officers and officials, tall commanding figures, riding out to play polo on their well-trimmed ponies.

It was natural and proper that England should rule these alien races; some nations were obviously born to rule, others to be ruled. I accepted this as one of the world's fundamental principles, something like the eternal enmity between Moslems and Christians. The first three countries I lived in, Syria, Egypt and the Sudan, were governed by alien powers. My first notion of world relationships was that of England ruling this country and France ruling that. My first nationalist ambition was that Syria would come under British rule. That any country under British rule could be dissatisfied with its lot, could wish to rule itself, or (supposing it to entertain such irrational desires) could really rule itself if the British left it, was a notion that never occurred to me in those days. It was taken for granted in the talk to which from my earliest days I had listened that the East was inferior to the West in every way, especially in political matters, and would always be so; that no Eastern nation could rule itself profitably; and that therefore it was the best arrangement for all concerned that the Eastern nations should be under the rule of European powers.

British rule was, of course, the best and most just. I was constantly hearing about the efficiency and purity of British administration, the rectitude of British statesmen, and the incorruptibility of the British police. To anyone living under Turkish rule in those days, bureaucratic integrity must have seemed the rarest of all virtues. Reports, therefore, of the purity of English political life impressed us tremendously. My grandfather had quite a repertoire of stories illustrating this theme, to which I listened time after time. In Egypt and the Sudan Syrians saw British rule at work, and were greatly impressed by the contrast between it and Turkish rule. Method, organization, justice and official honesty dazzled the Syrian mind hitherto accustomed to a corrupt and inefficient régime. The prosperity of Egypt, its good government, the state of public security in it, were not these so many miracles wrought by British administrative genius in the remarkably short period of thirty years? Fortunate Egypt! Unhappy Syria! No naïve, stout-hearted English man or woman of the imperialist school could have believed more implicitly than I did in England's divinely-appointed mission as the benevolent ruler of the "backward nations."

CHAPTER VIII

DEUS EX MACHINA

THE mechanical inventions of the West were beginning to invade the Near East about that time. The telegraph and the railway had been there for some time. They were familiar to my generation, but not to the extent that breeds contempt. Now new wonders were appearing. The electric tram, electric light, motor-cars and gramophones. Miracle after miracle, and all invented by Europeans. When you first heard of these strange things you perhaps doubted, but then the miracles arrived and you saw and heard them. There were, too, rumours of stranger, more incredible miracles, of motor-cars that could fly, ships that went under the sea, and telegraphy without wire; and all, all invented by the extremely clever Europeans. Surely the cleverest people in the world, much cleverer than the Orientals who had never invented anything.

Among the factors that wrought for the apotheosis of the West in Eastern minds, the mechanical aspect of European civilization—inventions and scientific appliances—was beyond doubt the most potent. For there was not and never had been anything corresponding to it in the East. Oriental genius had produced great religions, achieved great triumphs in art and literature, constructed colossal empires, but it had never tamed and canned the elements, packed scientific principles into little mechanical parcels. And it happened that while the intellect of awaking Europe was ferreting out and applying the secrets of nature, the East was passing through a phase of decline and somnolence. When therefore this flood of mechanical inventions burst in upon the Near East towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, Easterners were completely dazzled and fascinated by these undreamt-of wonders and the mysterious power that lay behind them.

I was eleven when I saw the first aeroplane. It was 1914 (just before the war) and we were living at Omdurman. Early in the winter rumours began to go round that a French aviator was coming to Khartoum. No aeroplane had yet visited the Sudan, and so everybody was tremendously excited about it, especially the natives, most of whom at first would not believe that there were such things as aeroplanes. Then the rumours became more and more definite; the name of the aviator was given, the route he was following, the approximate date of his arrival, the place of landing. It was becoming real, imminent. At last the day and the hour were announced; and the whole population of Khartoum, from the Governor-General to street

boys, assembled to see the miracle. The landing-place was in a stretch of sand some way outside the town, and we went there by cab. I was consumed with excitement. A good many of the natives were still sceptical, thought that there must be some trick afoot, some huge jest. Impossible that a man, a real man, should come in a machine flying like a bird. Impossible.

2 o'clock . . . 2.15 . . . 2.30 . . . Excitement, impatience, doubt. And then a low distant drone, and a black speck in the sky, there, coming from the north. A hush for a second . . . exclamations, jabberings, strained necks, stretched arms. There he is, there he is! Yes . . . No . . . yes . . . no . . . yes, yes, yes. The noise is louder, the speck is bigger. "What? that thing," said a doubting Sudanese standing next to us. "Why it is a vulture, and the noise is coming from the Power Station." But soon all doubt, all argument ceased. The vulture was above our heads, huge as ten eagles, filling the air with its deafening drone, and as it circled down, a human arm stretched out of it and waved to the crowd. The miracle had come off. Several Sudanese falling on their knees with upstretched arms exclaimed: "There is no god but Allah; the Resurrection Day has come."

Before the machine reached the ground, the seething crowd, beyond itself with excitement, had broken through the police cordon, and rushed towards the landing spot. The Governor-General, who according to plan was to advance with becoming dignity towards the machine, and welcome the distinguished aviator, while the watching crowd watched from a respectful distance, had to forget his dignity and advance with hurried steps to be able to get there at all, while the crowd pushed and jostled in its mad eagerness to see this huge artificial bird, and especially the man in it. Was it really a man, this weird-looking creature with its leather head and huge protruding oval eyes, stepping down on to the ground? See, see, he's waving his arm again, he is shaking hands with the Governor-General. *Wallahi zol, zol sahih.* (By God it's a man, a real man!) But even after this, our old Sudanese woman-servant had still some lingering doubts. "Really, Ya Sitt," she asked my mother when we had gone back home, "is it a real man, a *zol* like us, who eats and drinks and gets married?"

The cinema in its early days produced some curious reactions in the more primitive parts of the Sudan. An English friend of mine took with him a film-projector and some films to an out-station in Kordofan. One day he gathered several hundred tribesmen, and treated them to a performance. They squatted out on the sand before the screen, and shouted in great excitement at every picture. One of the films was an animated-drawings story, in which a man attacks a dog with an axe and splits him into two, after which the severed hind part runs along its legs until it catches up the front part, and the dog is thus

reintegrated. " By the living God," said one of the spectators of this miracle, " if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I should never have believed it." This, of course, was an extreme case of unquestioning credulity in a primitive African. But even in Syria and Egypt, on sophisticated minds with a great civilization in their cultural background, these inventions made a profound impression.

Here was something uncanny, apparently supernatural, and it was entirely the product of Western minds. No conjurer producing rabbits from a hat could have more impressed an assembly of unsophisticated children. The children had yet to learn that the conjurer was no god, and that they too when they grew up, could, if they took the trouble, learn to produce rabbits from a hat.

In " Mary Magdalene," the play by Maurice Maeterlinck, there is an interesting scene in which are contrasted the respective reactions of an impressionable Roman officer and a calm and critical philosopher to Christ's miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. On the officer the miracle has a staggering effect. It knocks on the head and destroys in a second all his accepted standards and beliefs. It shatters his confidence in himself and everything Roman. Here was something which no Roman philosopher or Caesar had ever done—a Jew conquering Death, before which the stoutest Roman knees had had to bend. Rome's accumulated greatness of seven centuries vanishes before the Galilean's solitary feat, and the Roman officer suggests that Romans should bow to the new master and become his disciples. But the old philosopher shakes his head. To raise a man from the dead was truly a miraculous achievement, but unless the Galilean could convince him that the life he was leading was not the best, and could show him the way to a better one, he would not become the Galilean's disciple even if the man were to raise all the dead in the world.

Confronted with European inventions most people in the Near East behaved at first in the manner of the Roman officer. Very few were those who reasoned like the philosopher. It was particularly difficult for them to do so, since in their case the miracles came not from a humble person belonging to a subject race, and endowed solely with the prestige of miraculous power, but from the dominant race of the world, whose claims to supremacy, political, military and economic stood unchallenged, and who (in so far as the Christians were concerned) appeared in the light of heroic champions as well.

True, the older and more fanatical Moslems disapproved of these inventions. They looked upon them with aversion and suspicion, as the diabolical contrivances of the Kuffar,[1] as something alien to Islam and the Koran, since they did not exist when the Prophet of God walked the earth. They scented in them half consciously the coming of a new world, mysterious, pregnant with alarming possibilities,

[1] Unbelievers.

hostile to them because incompatible with their old world, in which they and their ancestors have lived, secure in their faith, untroubled in their beliefs and prejudices. They saw this new world coming, and had the first premonition that their old world, which they had hitherto thought eternal, would soon begin to slip away from under their feet.

CHAPTER IX

FRIENDS OF FICTION

I HAD begun learning English at an early age. By the time I was ten years old I could read it fairly well, well enough to be able to understand easy children's books. At that time I knew Arabic much better than English, but there was very little I could read in Arabic. There was (and indeed still is) an almost complete lack of any kind of children's literature in Arabic. Of folklore, stories orally transmitted, there was an abundance, and the growing child would hear these from its mother and aunts, and more particularly from its grandparents and other elderly people. But of books there was nothing save Bible stories and a few translations of standard English books like *Robinson Crusoe*. Arabic class readers too were of the old-fashioned stereotyped kind, written in the classical style and therefore dead to a child's heart. For the difference between spoken Arabic and written is so immense that the simplest written Arabic book will sound pompous and artificial to a child, different from its living language, in which it thinks and talks and hears other people talk.

In my childhood then I had little to read save Bible stories and similar missionary efforts. At the Sunday School to which I went in Beyrouth I got an illustrated leaflet every Sunday, containing one or two stories exemplifying the triumph of Good over Evil, and suchlike moral themes. One of these was about the destruction of the Armada (Roman Catholic—Evil) by the forces of Queen Elizabeth (Protestant—Good). It is the only thing I remember of that mass of edifying literature. Later, when I was about ten, I read translations of *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Swiss Family*, and soon after I waded through my first English book—it was a translation of Jules Verne's *Five Weeks in a Balloon*. With the help of a small pocket dictionary I understood most of it. From that time onwards for four years I read nothing but English. We were again living at Omdurman. Owing to the lack of suitable schools, the education I received during those four years was of an entirely private character. At first my mother taught me. She used to give me lessons in Arabic, English, Arithmetic, Geography and religious knowledge. Later I had tutors in French, Arabic and Mathematics. But by far the most fruitful education I had in those days was my own private reading, for which being at home gave me ample time.

Again at that time there was little I could read in Arabic. Besides, my ardent admiration of everything British drew me exclusively to English literature. I plunged into it voraciously. First I read

Gulliver's Travels and Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, both of which had been given me by English friends of ours. Then I began to buy books with my pocket-money; with what I earned from the collection and sale of Sudan stamps to philatelists in England—a profitable trade which brought me quite a few shillings every month; with every little bit of money I got on my birthday, at Christmas and on other similar occasions. My father and mother did not know much about English books for boys of my age. I had therefore nothing to guide me in my quest save the lists at the end of books already in my possession, and the advice of the manager of the bookshop I patronized. With this good man I developed an intimate friendship, in virtue of which he allowed me great and numerous privileges. I used to go to his shop two or three times a week, and spend there two or three hours every time. He had not read himself any of the books in the shop, but he knew vaguely what books were suitable for boys of my age. Acting on his general advice I would pick out a book and read nearly half of it before deciding to buy it. But the greatest privilege he allowed me was that of exchanging books I had read (if well-preserved) for new ones without any additional payment. However, I only availed myself of this privilege in the case of books I did not really like. Those that had entered my heart's heart on the first reading I kept and with them began to form a little library, which soon became the joy and pride of my life. At its zenith this library consisted of two shelves of modest size, on which stood neatly arranged in their different colours some forty or fifty books. *Peter Simple* was there, and the *Three Midshipmen*, the *Coral Island*, *Robinson Crusoe* (now in English), *The Adventures and Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, *Ivanhoe* and the *Scottish Chiefs*. There were, too, several of Jules Verne's translated works, the *Three Musketeers* and many others of less note.

England and the English people whom I had hitherto loved and admired from a distance, through hearsay and in the abstract, now entered my life and became a dear reality to me. I lived and talked and laughed with English boys. I entered their homes and schools; shared their jokes and intimacies; I joined the Navy with them, scoured the seas in quest of adventures, fought and won battles under the Union Jack, was shipwrecked on desert islands and escaped back to England in their company. I became a frequent visitor to Baker Street, and sat with throbbing heart time after time in a corner of the cosy room where Sherlock Holmes, clad in the familiar dressing-gown, discussed the case of the day with his dear Watson. I roamed with Robin Hood in the forests of Merry England, robbed the rich and gave to the poor, stormed castles and watched tournaments; saw Richard the Lionhearted wielding his giant battle-axe, and cheered the Disinherited Knight unhorsing objectionable Templars.

And so a country which I had never seen except on the map came by imperceptible degrees to be mine in a spiritual sense more binding than the strongest ties of material relationship.

But while my mental and imaginative life was becoming more and more English, the actual life I lived at home was a Syrian life, and the environment in which up to that time I had lived was a Syrian environment. True, my mother had been educated at an English school and my father at an American college. True, they had known many English people, come under various English influences, and were both fairly well read in English literature. Yet they had not become in any way anglicized. The English and American education they had received was not of the kind that penetrates deep into the mind and personality. European schools had only recently been established in Syria, had not created an atmosphere yet when my father and mother were being educated. The home influence was still strongly Arabic. My mother's father was one of the first men in Syria to learn English, but my paternal grandfather did not know a word of it. And my father himself, while knowing English well, was a keen Arabic scholar, and preferred his mother tongue to English, since it was in it that he thought and spontaneously expressed himself. He had, indeed, outstanding literary gifts, and was something of an Arabic poet. He often wrote poetry in the old classical style, but what he was particularly fond of was light verse in the colloquial Syrian tongue. In the Lebanon this kind of verse was very popular in those days. Everybody could understand it; it was simple, familiar; the natural expression in the spoken language of native wit and humour, and it was for the most part extemporized by masters of the art with astonishing spontaneity. Of such masters or Qawwals, as they were called (literally "Sayers"), there were five or six in different parts of the Lebanon, renowned throughout the land, as well as a host of minor adepts. No great wedding or other joyous celebration was considered to be complete without the presence of one or two of these rustic poets. They would be sent for to distant parts of the country, in the dead of winter sometimes, to come for one or two nights. Sometimes there would be only one, with a host of young men sitting round him; and amidst the clinking of Araki glasses he would extemporize line after line, the audience repeating after him, and beating rhythm on a hand drum, late into the night. At other times there would be two rival masters engaged in a duel of witty repartee. It was on these occasions that the best results were achieved, sometimes as many as fifty or sixty lines being extemporized of an evening.

This tradition was already dying out in my father's time. It belonged to the old rustic order of things, which was rapidly passing away. But my father, like many others of the new educated generation, developed a taste and talent for this kind of verse, and became very

prolific in it. As a child I knew by heart most of his efforts and greatly relished them.

In most other ways too my father was still a staunch Syrian. He did not discard the Tarboush (fez) for the hat. At home in the afternoons and evenings when we had no visitors, he wore the Caftan. In spite of his great admiration for the British he never copied any of their peculiarities. His was an essentially independent character. The fact that European habits and ways of life were becoming fashionable among most Syrians did not affect him in the least. Indeed he disapproved of and despised this tendency, and was proud of asserting his independence, sometimes quite aggressively. Our home language was Arabic, and in all essentials our life was still Syrian.

CHAPTER X

ENGLAND FOR EVER

A LITTLE boy who has so far only seen local village football is going to Twickenham to see the 'Varsity match. Supreme thrill of his life! He is strongly Oxford, for he lives somewhere in the vicinity of Henley, and once an Oxford undergraduate actually came and lived in their house for a week in the vacation.

He sees dark blue rosettes and light blue; dark blue mascots and light blue. Everybody, London, the whole world is dark blue or light blue—Oxford or Cambridge. He hears the newspaper boys shouting "Twickenham! Twickenham this afternoon! 'Varsity Match!" He sees cars and trains and 'buses racing to Twickenham carrying fifty thousand people to see the Great Event; sees lined outside the ground cars innumerable, emblazoned with dark blue and light blue ribbons; sees, O unique moment! fifteen Dark Blue heroes and fifteen Light Blue lesser heroes take the field, and hears in swelling rhythmic chorus the epic words "Oxford," "Cambridge," while he sits there transported by the glory of this Homeric spectacle, the centre of which is a contested ball. Come on Oxford! Oxford for ever! For does he not live in the vicinity of Henley, and did not an Oxford man once stay at their house?

It is the 4th of August, 1914. Substitute for Twickenham the Western Front and the High Seas; for Oxford heroes, England and the Allies; for the Cambridge XV German villains and barbarians, and for the little English boy who lived in the vicinity of Henley a little Syrian boy who lived at Khartoum, and you will have a fairly accurate picture of my feelings at the outbreak of the first World War.

How well I remember the tense excitement of that last week in July, the talk of war and rumours of war; Reuter's news awaited eagerly from day to day; excited discussions—wonderful thrilling words, conjuring up wonderful thrilling pictures, my vocabulary growing in leaps and bounds hour by hour—Mobilization, Ultimatums, Neutralities; Sir Edward Grey looking very portentous on leaving the House of Commons, the British Fleet ordered back from its summer holiday—millions of troops and wonderful mighty guns thundering along the highways of Europe. Growlings and rumblings of a gathering storm. I had always loved storms, loved to hear from my warm cosy bed the desolate shrieking of the wind in December—loved to watch from behind closed windows the wintry skeletons of the trees lashed and bent by the raging blasts.

But this was the storm of storms gathering over Europe. Its first

distant rumblings gripped and held me fascinated. Would it only burst? I trembled lest it should fizzle out without a proper explosion. How dull if everybody yielded to the other's ultimatum, and all these assembled hosts were disbanded, and the British Fleet went back to its summer holiday, and there was no war at all! Picture the audience waiting to see the Tunney-Dempsey fight being told that those two gentlemen had settled their rival claims to the title amicably and were not going to appear in the ring! Groundless fears, thank Heavens! Sir Edward Grey is looking very portentous. Germany rejects the ultimatum. England declares war. The storm has burst. The referee's whistle has blown. The grandest contest of all the ages has begun. Come on England! England for ever!

For the next four years I had little interest in anything save the War. England's greatness, prowess, heroism, all the things I had hitherto admired in the past were now in full and magnificent play before my very eyes. My interest in the War became a passion. I bought a map of Europe, and hung it up on the wall next to my bookshelf; and with tiny pin-flags, French and British, marked on it the line of the Western Front and its daily fluctuations. I got a copy of the *Statesman's Year Book* from my uncle's office, and learned the name and tonnage of every ship in the British Navy. My visits to the bookshop at Khartoum became more and more frequent as the illustrated war papers started coming in. My friend, the manager, whose work had greatly increased, proposed to me that I should go and help him for a couple of hours every day, in return for which he would give me one of the illustrated weekly papers apart from the privilege of looking at all the others, an arrangement which I readily accepted. Orgy of orgies! Troops and battleships and guns—trenches, explosions. Germans lying about dead and vanquished, as the characteristic German helmet in characteristically vanquished attitudes testified. For the patriotic artist, in drawing a heap of corpses in undignified positions, always took care to place by way of subtle suggestion a German helmet or two in the corner of his picture.

Then came the dark days of September—the days of endless retreat, of Germany's triumphant advance on Paris. At first I stubbornly refused to believe that it was a forced retreat. I buoyed my heart up with the belief that it was a strategic move, a subtle plan on Joffre's part, a trap! He was only luring the Germans on, drawing them into the heart of France. To-day, to-morrow he would show his hand, the trap would close on them. But when to-day and to-morrow and the day after passed and no trap came to light, and the Allies still retreated, my faith began to falter; and when the Germans came within seventeen kilometres of Paris, the day before the battle of the Marne, I broke down and cried all the evening. The ball was making for the net, and it seemed that nothing would stop it. Nothing! A black

night, and then morning, and the glorious news! Joffre, greatest of goalkeepers, had saved; had hit out like a giant, and with one magnificent blow hurled the ball back to the centre, where it was to remain for the next four years, tossed about in local manœuvres, but far from either goal.

My private fortune at that time consisted of five pounds. I had for some time been saving up with the object of buying a bicycle, and had by dint of stringent abstinences amassed this sum by the autumn of 1914. Another year and I could buy the bicycle, realizing a long cherished ambition. But even this long cherished ambition could not compete against my enthusiasm for the cause of the Allies. I contributed my five pounds to the Prince of Wales's Relief Fund. It was the only thing I could do to make me feel that I was participating in the War, and I did want to feel that I was participating in it, that I was fighting side by side with "Peter Simple" and the "Three Midshipmen." I wished that I were older that I might run away and volunteer.

My mother, however, was very thankful that we were not British or French, that we did not belong to any country whose sons had to fight. "I can't understand," my mother would say, "how women can endure this, how they consent to having their sons taken to fight. If anyone wanted to take my son to fight, I'd take him and flee away to the other end of the world."

It was difficult for the Syrian to understand the nature of this supreme sacrifice on the individual's part in the interests of the State. He could make sacrifices for his relations, for his friends, for what were to him human realities. But this strange thing the State, or the Nation, he did not know. To him it was no reality at all, but a formula and abstraction, something perceived intellectually but not felt with one's whole being. He admired the patriotic spirit of the European, saw in it something lofty, which he himself lacked and therefore admired it all the more.

But to me, who for several years past had been reading books of English history, and more particularly the sort of heroic literature provided for the male youth of England in those days, it seemed the most natural and glorious thing in the world that men should fight, and if need be die for their country. In spite of my religious upbringing on the principles enunciated by the Prince of Peace I had not learned to regard war with abhorrence. War had never been represented to me from the international or humanitarian point of view; I had never been taught to view it with the necessary detachment as a barbarous exercise and a calamity to mankind. I had only looked at it from the national point of view, which in my case was the English point of view. The only wars I was familiar with were wars between upright infallible England and villainous aggressive enemies, a contest between right and wrong, a glorious battle, in which the forces of Good in the British

uniform fought and conquered the forces of Evil in all sorts of other uniforms.

Often I would indulge in day-dreams—imagine the victorious Allies entering Berlin to the sound of rousing martial music—drums beating and flags flying . . . French and Joffre (and later Foch and Haig) riding high on haughty steeds, and the Germans cowering in sheltered corners and behind walls, crushed and humiliated. Or I would conjure up visions of a big naval battle, the German fleet coming out of its hiding, the British fleet swooping down on it, thundering, blowing it to pieces. I wanted England to win first and foremost for her own sake, because I loved her, because I took pride in her greatness and felt that she belonged to me; but I was also aware of an important incidental consideration. For us, Syrian Christians, the victory of England and her Allies would realize the dream we had dreamt for many long years, the dream of a Syria free from the Turkish yoke and from fear of the Moslems and placed directly under the protection of a European power. I knew that the Arabs were in revolt against Turkey, fighting on the side of England and planning to set up an independent Arab State after the War, but we Christians had no real interest in this movement. Arab nationalism seemed to us mainly a Moslem affair and we mistrusted it. A few Christians did indeed take part in it, but they were a mere handful and were regarded by the rest as misguided and dangerous cranks. Besides, the Syrian Christians and particularly the Lebanese, living along the Mediterranean coast in contact with European influences from the earliest times, were a sophisticated people and looked down upon the Arabs of the interior as a primitive race far below them in culture. On cultural grounds, therefore, as well as religious, the Christian Arabs of Syria had no desire to share in an Arab state which they were sure would be backward and reactionary. Their one desire was that England or France would come to Syria and protect and help them forward—and the realization of that dream was now imminent.

CHAPTER XI

THE FIRST SHOCK

LIKE a true hero-worshipper I neither criticized nor questioned. I was not aware that there was anything to criticize or question in the character of my hero. I was at the sublime age at which it is possible to believe in perfection. England was still far from me, wrapped in the transfiguring mists of distance—not an objective reality, but the creature of my own fervent imagination. And is it not one of the great comforts of our life that although God would not or could not create a perfect world, man in his imagination can and does?

The first intimation of the fact that there are people who do not believe in God comes as a great shock to the believing child. It came as a great shock to me. A similar experience was my lot when I knew for the first time that there were also people who did not believe in the perfection of the British race. Secure in my faith, however, I was at first more pained than perturbed by this knowledge.

I began to hear that the British were unpopular, that they were snobbish and arrogant, that they despised everybody who was not British and trampled on other people's dignity, that however much you tried to be friends with them they remained aloof and haughty and wanted you to remain at a respectful distance. I began to hear of instances illustrating these attributes—of an English Officer or Inspector striking a native in the Suk for not having stood up when he approached—of another insulting his Syrian or Egyptian subordinate, of a third doing this, and a fourth doing that, all being incidents showing a contemptuous attitude towards Easteners, the attitude of a haughty master who has little human contact with the people under his rule. True, these were only isolated instances, and in most of them the British offender was a newcomer, a dyspeptic or a crude officer. But quite apart from such particular incidents, the general attitude of the British ruling aristocracy, remote, aloof, self-glorified, was in itself beginning to be offensive to the natives and to foreign communities alike. I more than once heard the British officials referred to as the sons of God—presumably some other God than Him whose Son was born in the manger, as they could not have earned the appellation through any family resemblance to this last. Even the Syrians, who had come to the Sudan as the hero-worshippers and self-instituted protégés of the British, were somewhat alienated by the attitude of these Olympians. My father admired the British profoundly, but he possessed what Dr. Johnson once described as defensive pride, in an exceptionally high degree. He stood on his dignity very sensitively when dealing with people who

showed in any way, direct or implied, that they considered themselves superior to him socially or racially. Inherently modest himself, he became almost aggressively haughty in self-defence if he felt that he was in any danger of being slighted, and the instant he suspected a slight in word or deed he hit back boldly, almost fiercely. This state of mind made him extremely reserved with the British. His official relations with them were correct and cordial, but he kept out of their way as much as he could in order, as he said, to avoid unpleasant complications. While my mother made friends with a few English ladies, on whom she called from time to time and who also called on us, my father, as a rule, avoided having any private relations with the men, although with some of them he developed a lasting professional friendship.

It was very painful for me to hear that the British looked down on us. I tried to persuade myself that it was not true, that anyhow it was not true of the majority of Englishmen. But all the same, the knowledge, or suspicion, that Englishmen despised Easterners affected me profoundly. My first reactions to reported instances of the contempt of Englishmen for Syrians were those of resentment, of hatred for the particular offender. I felt that somehow the insult touched me personally, since an Englishman who despised one Syrian would despise another, would despise me. It was not a question of standing up for my country or countrymen, but simply of standing up for my own dignity as an individual.

But as various little incidents and the feelings they aroused sank into my mind, I myself began to be conscious of a feeling of contempt for Easterners, and to be half ashamed of being one. My desire to identify myself with the English people, to become more and more English in my habits and ways, to adopt England and be adopted by her was greatly intensified by these feelings. Had I been a nationalist, had I had any strong feeling of solidarity with other Syrians, of love for my country and my race, my reaction, I suppose, would have been the very opposite of this. I should then have reacted by hating Englishmen and asserting my nationality with a fanatical aggressiveness and a pretended belief in its superiority. But I was not and never had been a nationalist. It was suggested to me that I was an inferior being through my belonging to a certain nationality and race, to which I had never been bound by any strong spiritual ties, and my reaction naturally assumed the shape of a desire to sever all the connections of that relationship which brought me discredit in the eyes of the people I admired most. That relationship had never meant much to me: now, if it was going to be a stigma on me, surely then I would cast it off.

The reaction set in gradually, provoked by numerous occurrences big and small. It developed from day to day, gaining in acuteness, becoming more and more conscious, until it dominated my whole being.

The first symptoms of it appeared when I was still in the Sudan, before I went to school. I began to disapprove of my father's confirmed Orientalism, to be secretly ashamed of it, to wish that our home life was more English. Not that there was anything inherently objectionable in the things I disapproved of. It was entirely a question of symbolism. Whatever seemed to me to symbolize the East I began to regard with repugnance, as though contact with it would contaminate me, stamp me with an opprobrious mark. Even from the dignified and beautiful silk Caftan I turned away with feelings of aversion, wished that my father did not wear it at home, that he wore instead a European dressing-gown. I myself had worn the Caftan at home in my younger days. Now the memory of it stirred in me feelings of shame.

I had heard much about the efficient rule of the British in Egypt, and the prosperity it had brought to the land. Now I began hearing of another aspect of the matter, of the humiliations suffered by the Egyptians in their subjection, of their dislike of the British and desire to get rid of them, of Mustafa Kamel[1] and the Nationalist Movement. This was new and perturbing knowledge. It seemed to carry a challenge to all my previous notions about England and the British Empire and what people felt about it, but the challenge was so feeble that I was soon able to dismiss it.

[1] Egyptian national leader, not Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

CHAPTER XII

END OF A PERIOD

FOR many years I had had no company of my own age of either sex. My friends during those four years in Omdurman were middle-aged Syrian gentlemen, friends of the family, who took an interest in me either because they were bachelors and had nobody else to take an interest in or because they were living away from their families and I, being the only Syrian boy present, stimulated their paternal instincts. I had four of these friends, three of whom, a long-standing intimacy demanding something less formal than Mister, I called "Uncle." With the fourth, my relations were slightly more formal, as I saw him less often than the other three, and his culture was French, which made me feel that he was something of a foreigner.

There was Uncle Selim, an ascetic vegetarian and a stoic, nearly sixty, strong and hard in mind and body, but hiding behind his exterior of steel a kind and affectionate heart. I admired the steel, the mighty grip of the hand, the expression of endurance in the face which looked as though it had seen much but never winced, the firmly-set shoulders and erect back carrying invisible burdens but not bending under them, and the steady, resolute step that seemed determined to go through life at the same pace, with the same decision no matter where the road might lead. Uncle Selim was a doctor and research worker. He was in charge of the military hospital at the other end of Omdurman, and he lived in a lonely house overlooking the river which he called "The Hermitage." For a year and a half he came to dinner with us every night and from him I, just beginning to think and enquire about the wonders of the universe, sought scientific knowledge about natural history and the stars. He was very patient with me, and answered all my questions, telling me about Darwin and Evolution, Pasteur and Hydrophobia and Lister. Or he would discuss his interesting cases with my father and I would listen fascinated to the thrilling mysteries of disease and diagnosis, seeing medicine as a wonderful battle, disease as a crafty criminal and my father and Uncle Selim as great detectives on his trail.

And there was Uncle Nessib, a Government official who worked in Khartoum but lived in Omdurman and whom I had known from my earliest days, short, stout, but always immaculately dressed, with his trim little beard and moustache in two layers; a foundation stratum which was a part of the beard and looked like a tooth-brush and a super-structure that stuck out in daring and pointed independence, completely ignoring the parent bed. He lived right in the middle of

the native city and mixed with the Sudanese more intimately than any other foreigner in the Sudan, mixed with them not from above but on their own plane, sharing their life genuinely yet infusing into it something of his superior culture and refinement. The Sudanese loved him as they loved no other resident, regarding him as one of them and looking up to him as a guide and mentor, especially in their dealings with the English whom he understood and admired. In the evening he was always dressed like a Sheikh, but what a Sheikh! Red native slippers, white socks, a white silk Caftan, a white belt, a white woollen jibba, a white skull-cap and, round it, a neat white turban. It was in this dress that he used to come to dinner with us, and though it was the quintessence of Orientalism I did not disapprove of it as I disapproved of my father's Caftan; for I looked upon it as a picturesque fancy dress, not as a native part of him. When I used to go to Khartoum for my private lessons he and I used to cross the river back to Omdurman together in the evening and we used to walk from the ferry landing to the town. He was a wonderful talker and there were few things I liked more than to listen to him. He would talk to me about my lessons and my future, about the War and his faith in the Allies, about the Sudanese whom he loved and the British whom he greatly admired, and he would explain to me the fine things in the British character and in British administration that made him admire them—their integrity, their humaneness and their justice.

The third was Uncle Labib, a good Arabic and English scholar who was the Editor of an Arabic-English newspaper that appeared in Khartoum called the *Sudan Times*. I used to pay him frequent visits at his office, and he published, as a curiosity from a boy of thirteen, one or two articles I had written on the War, in Arabic. But before the end of the War we became competitors, for I started a war newspaper, written by hand on foolscap paper, and for private circulation among the "Editor's friends." The subscription was, for one month, ten sheets of ruled foolscap, which was just enough for the four weekly issues, allowing for drafting and waste. Uncle Labib, rising above professional jealousy, wrote me an introductory poem for the first issue, which I published with "the Editor's thanks to our esteemed colleague."

The three Uncles had all been educated at the American University of Beyrouth, spoke English well and were well-read in English literature, so that I felt intellectually at home with them and they in different ways encouraged and guided me in my English studies.

My fourth friend was Mr. Kfouri, who had a big cotton farm on the Nile and a dog-cart, and used to take me out shooting with him, providing me with a small gun. It was during these shooting expeditions that Mr. Kfouri would talk to me about his five boys who were all at an English school at Alexandria, called Victoria College, and what

a very good school it was, and how the boys there played football and cricket and tennis, and how his sons were very happy there, and . . . wouldn't I like to go to that school? Of course I would. Would he tell my father and mother about it; would he persuade them to send me? One day he took me to his house after we had been shooting at the farm and gave me a copy of the school prospectus. It had the names of the Masters and photographs of the buildings and playgrounds. I gazed at the pictures with rapture and yearning. An English school! Large stately building, boys playing football. I saw myself among them—captain perhaps—scoring, amidst cheers, a brilliant goal. English masters! I went through their names, imagining what they looked like. One name held my attention. R. W. G. Reed, M.A., Wadham College, Oxford—History Master. I stopped at it, read it again and again. He would teach me history, my favourite subject. And in that prophetic moment, on no foundation but the sound of a name coupled with History and Oxford, a lifelong attachment began to form. I felt that if I ever went to Victoria College I was going to like Mr. Reed. He would also like me. I would be a good pupil, work hard and win his approbation. A vision rose before my eyes. Scene: Classroom.

Mr. Reed: What do you know about King John?

I: King John was the worst king England ever had.

Mr. Reed: Yes, that's very good.

But I knew that there were difficulties in the way, great difficulties. I had never lived away from my mother; she was very much attached to me and had never entertained the idea of sending me to boarding-school. The plan about my future education was that when the War came to an end my mother would live in Beyrouth and I should go to the American University there as a day scholar. I had been well pleased with this prospect until I heard of Victoria College, but from that moment the American University ceased to have any attraction for me. How could it compete with a school where the masters came from Oxford and Cambridge, where the boys took Oxford and Cambridge certificates, a school described in the prospectus as being "on Public School lines," that is to say like Eton and Harrow and the other great schools of England. In my imagination Victoria College became an outpost of England and I resolved to go there and have an English education. Besides, the War was not over yet, the way to the American University was closed and I was nearly fifteen. So I began to agitate to be allowed to go to Victoria College at least till the War was over. I reasoned with my father, I pleaded with my mother. Uncle Selim and Uncle Nessib gave me strong support. My mother began to yield—victory was in sight, and then an unexpected blow. My father asked Mr. Kfouri about the fees, and decided that he could not afford them. He announced this one day at a family council

R. W. G. Reed, late headmaster of Victoria College, Alexandria

meeting, including my uncle and aunt, which had been sitting on the question. I subsided into a chair in a corner and brooded in great misery over the fragments of my shattered dream. Never would I score that brilliant goal, never astonish Mr. Reed with what I knew about King John, never obtain an Oxford and Cambridge certificate.

For some time after this there was no more talk of my going to school. I consoled myself with my interest in the War, with my books and with a romantic attachment.

When we had left Syria just before the outbreak of the War I was still completely insensible to the charms of the opposite sex. My last relations with white girls of my age had been of a decidedly hostile character, and in the Sudan I had been growing for three years without seeing the skirt of a white girl. Then suddenly I began to be aware, in a pleasurable way which I had not known before, of the presence of a girl in the neighbourhood. She was the daughter of an American missionary, and had two younger brothers and sisters, she herself being about my own age, fourteen or so. They had been living near us for some time, and once a month or so I and my younger sister had gone to play with them in their lovely garden. At first the only pleasure I got out of these visits was that of change and play, and then a new, mysterious kind of pleasure crept in, and I began to smarten myself up for these visits, bestowing more care than before on my tie and the parting of my hair. We had recently bought a dog-cart and horse, and as my father had a saddle for his donkey, I used to borrow it for the horse sometimes, and gallop about in the neighbourhood, hoping that Dulcinea would see me and admire my equestrian prowess.

But I was very shy about this attachment, and kept it a close secret. My ostensible attitude to our visits to Dulcinea and her family was that I merely went there for my sister's sake, as she liked to go and play with the younger brothers and sisters but did not like to go alone. One day when we had not seen them for some time, I casually asked my sister, being alone with her, if she would not like to go and play with Geoffrey and Peggy that afternoon, assuming an artful indifference as to myself, but an extreme regard for her enjoyment. She jumped at the idea, so I suggested that she might ask Mother if we could go, adding casually, but indiscreetly, that she needn't tell Mother that I had suggested it. It was a tactical blunder for which I paid dearly. For my sister, though only at the supposedly innocent age of five, fathomed my guile and realized that I regarded the matter as a guilty secret, and that therefore it had considerable possibilities as an instrument of blackmail. On being annoyed with me about something at lunch, in the presence of my father and mother, she stared me full and menacingly in the face, and said, " Shall I tell Mother what you said to me this morning ? " and as my cheeks were going hot and crimson under the threat of this terrible treachery, out came the awful secret : " Edward

told me this morning to ask you to let us go and play with the Sowash children, and he said," this with a sinister emphasis, " Don't tell Mother I told you ! " Oh, the embarrassment of that moment ! Fie on the age of innocence, the dirty little traitress !

When 1918 came and the War still dragged on, I resumed my agitation to go to Victoria College. By this time my father's private practice was very flourishing, and the question of fees thus ceasing to be an obstacle, both my father and mother gave their consent, and it was decided that I should go there the following October. I should score that goal after all ; Mr. Reed was doomed to hear my views on King John. In ecstasy I plunged into the details of preparation. Mr. Kfouri got one of his sons to send us the school syllabus up to date, and a number of books to prepare me for a class suitable to my age. I studied these avidly and when I looked at the school prospectus now, the pictures of the buildings and the names of the masters and their degrees filled me with a glow of proprietorial pride. Then followed corporal preparations—tailors, measurements, fittings—long trousers—for the first time, and starched collars.

And early in the summer of 1918 we left the Sudan for Egypt. It was a wonderful change for me. Our long term of imprisonment was over. I had not seen the outside world, the world of big cities, tall buildings and throbbing streets for four years, and I was burning with eagerness to go back and live in it, in close touch with Europe and its latest inventions.

We spent the summer at a place called Ras-el-Barr, a narrow strip of sand between the Mediterranean and the Nile at its Rosetta mouth which, a deserted beach in winter, becomes in summer a lively resort crowded with annually erected mat-huts and a swarming population of holiday makers in pyjamas and bathing-suits.

We found ourselves there in the midst of a large and friendly Syrian colony from Cairo and Alexandria which, however, in one respect, was alien to us. The Syrians I had known in Syria and the Sudan had mostly had an English or American education, but these Syrians from Cairo and Alexandria, and particularly their younger generation, the boys and girls of my own age, had all been to French schools and their culture was entirely French. Syrians educated at American or English schools in Syria rarely became anglicized or Americanized. They might acquire a good command of English as a second language, but it never replaced their mother tongue, and together they always spoke Arabic, which was well taught at the American University and the English mission schools in Syria. But these young Syrians from Cairo and Alexandria had been cast in a French mould at the Jesuit and Frères and Lycée schools. They thought in French and spoke French ; they had French tastes, sang French songs and quoted French literature and history. Most of the boys knew Arabic, but only

as a second language for which they had no feeling. The girls, however, did not even know it.

At first I felt a stranger and a provincial in this company. Gradually I made a few individual friends, but to the company as a whole I could not belong. French was the language of society, of culture, and I did not know it. But I knew English and was proud of it. I would not exchange it for all the French in the world. The feeling of inferiority which my ignorance of French aroused in me served only to enhance my pride in English and redouble my resolve to master it and make it my own, even as these compatriots of mine mastered French and made it their own. I was conscious that my English was not yet as good as their French. I lacked their fluency; I had not had as much practice in English as they had in French. But I would catch up on them; I would perfect my English and pit it against their French. Thus more than ever before knowledge of the English language and possession of English culture became the main prop of my self-respect. I carried an English dictionary in my pocket and looked up in it every new word I came across. I spent hours every day, when washing and dressing in the morning, before going to sleep at night, whenever I happened to be alone, in forming and re-forming English sentences in my head and practising pronunciation. I had reached the stage of immediately recognizing the mistakes I made in speech, especially when I was speaking to an English person. I recognized them with little pangs of mortification. I felt them as stabs wounding my pride and as soon as I was by myself again I would go over them many times, re-forming the sentences, mentally cutting out the wrong word, correcting the faulty structure.

My father's reaction to the Gallic challenge of Ras-el-Barr was, of course, entirely different from mine. He answered the challenge with the robust assertion of his Syrian characteristics and his mother tongue. He railed the bright young things who could not speak a sentence of correct Arabic. He answered their *bon jours* and *bon soirs* with the Arabic equivalents which, he pointed out, sounded just as nice and were just as friendly. He refused to use even the simplest and commonest international French expressions which were used by many who knew nothing else of French, and while others wore their pyjamas on the beach, he stuck to his Caftan. I was torn between disapproval and admiration, but I could see that his independent character and the good-humoured way in which he asserted it made him both respected and popular, even among the bright young things. And so the summer months passed. I bathed and sailed and prepared myself for school. I became very happy and by the end had several good friends with whom I spoke a bit of Arabic, a bit of English and the little French I had picked up in three months. As the autumn came great things began to happen. Allenby's final triumphant offensive

against the Turks and the Germans in Syria was in full swing, along the coast, past Jaffa and Haifa, on to Beyrouth. Every day brought news of a new advance. City after city in Palestine and Syria were liberated from the Turks. A hated empire which had lasted four centuries was passing away. The long-deferred hope of the Syrian Christians, the dream of my early childhood, was coming true.

CHAPTER XIII

VICTORIA COLLEGE

MY first impression of Alexandria was a depressing one. We travelled by night from Damietta. In the compartment with us was a boy of about my own age, who was also going to school at Alexandria. He was travelling alone, and looked, to me at least, sad and lonely. His presence throughout the journey was a reminder to me that I too should soon be separated from my family; I saw myself in his place, alone, with only a trunk like his, and a lump formed in my throat which I manfully tried to suppress. I was fifteen years old, and had never been away from home. Soon I should be alone at a strange place, and a similar train would be tearing my father and mother and sister away to Khartoum—a thousand miles.

We arrived at Alexandria at midnight, and the city was dark and gloomy, war regulations about lighting being still in force, for it was only October 1918. The hotel we went to was a small one on the second floor of a big building; and I felt oppressed as I went to bed in it that first night, after the spacious freedom of bungalow and garden life in the Sudan, and of mat-huts on the beach of Ras-el-Barr. Cars and tramways hooted and jingled and rumbled in the streets around us, making me feel small and lonely in a strange world.

The next morning Mr. Kfouri called and took us to Victoria College, to see the Headmaster. I was now tremendously excited; my depression of the previous night had been dissipated by the life and brightness of the day, the view of the sea from the hotel windows, and the prospect of seeing the school. A thousand thrills surged in me about the school and the city itself, so famous in history. I had read about it all in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Alexandria! the meeting-place of East and West, the great emporium of merchandise and ideas between Europe and Asia, founded by Alexander the Great when he came to conquer the East and give it Greek civilization; the academy of the world in the third century B.C., the home of brilliant philosophers and mathematicians. In it Euclid had propounded the theorems which I should be studying soon; Diophantus founded Algebra; Eratosthenes measured the circumference of the earth, and Ptolemy made the first Atlas . . . the scene of Antony and Cleopatra, the connecting link in the trade routes between East and West in the Middle Ages, to which came rich caravans, bringing from Suez the cargoes of Eastern ships, and from which argosies sailed for the Italian ports, laden with the silks of China, and the spices of the Indies.

Out in the streets, in the tramcars, in the shops, in the cafés, you

heard four or five languages spoken simultaneously—exclamations, greetings, sentences, half-sentences in Arabic, English, French, Italian and Greek crowded in upon your ears in a veritable Tower-of-Babel jumble, and you heard the newspaper boys, dirty but attractive small Egyptian boys, shouting lustily: "*Echo . . . Echo . . . Egyptian Gazette . . . Bourse Egyptienne, Bourse . . . Wadinnil . . . Ahram . . . Messagero Egyzziano . . .*"

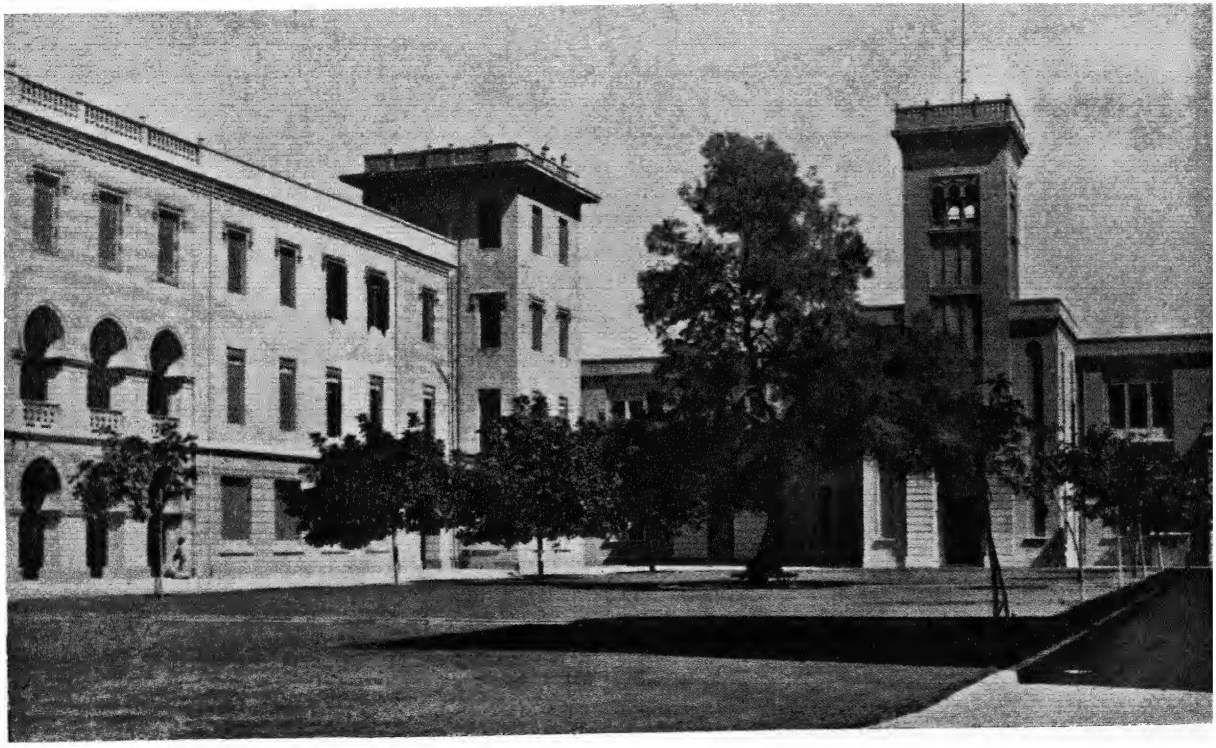
Before we went to the school we took the tramway to the end of Ramleh, a beautiful run parallel to the sea, and alongside sumptuous (a little too sumptuous) houses, and trim (a little too trim) gardens; and I noticed the names of the stations—Camp Caesar, Ibrahimieh, Cleopatra, Mustapha Pasha, Carlton, Bulkeley, Saba Pasha, Glymenopuolo, Bacos, Gianaclis, St. George, Sidi Bishr, Victoria—a Roman Caesar, an ancient Graeco-Egyptian Queen, a modern Egyptian warrior, two English gentlemen, two Egyptian Pashas, three Greek gentlemen, a British saint, an Egyptian saint, and an English Queen, who gave her name to the station through the school that was built there in 1907.

I was disappointed not to find the school buildings as imposing as I had imagined them to be. I knew that these were not the school's own buildings (as these had been taken by the army and were now a military hospital), but I wished they had got a slightly more imposing substitute. A few boys were strolling about the grounds, some of them wearing tarbooshes—Egyptian boys. A feeling of disapproval at this Oriental touch. I had expected the boys to look more English.

We walked past the class-rooms, Mr. Kfouri leading the way, and I walking between my father and mother. Timidly I looked in through the glass panes, taking lightning stock of my future masters and comrades: faces, faces, . . . spectacles, a pointed chin and large brown moustaches . . . a fat boy . . . a smiling face . . . faces, faces.

We went into the Headmaster's study. My hands were cold, and there was a strong ache in my heart. A panic of homesickness was coming over me, utterly destroying the magic I had so much looked forward to. The Headmaster, Mr. Lias, sat at his desk—a solidly-built figure of medium height, in a dark suit; solid, well-shaped squarish head; piercing intelligent eyes, enlarged and intensified by the most powerful spectacles I had ever seen; and a deep resonant voice. Beside him stood Mr. Reed, tall, thin, ascetic-looking, active and kindly black eyes—I felt timid and small. Gone from me now was the desire to dazzle him with my brilliance.

After having heard the Headmaster prophesy that the boy who had been with his mother for fifteen years would one day be head of the school, and brooding hopefully over this prophecy, I was marched off by Hassan, the Secretary, to be examined by the various masters.



VICTORIA COLLEGE, ALEXANDRIA

Monsieur Dumont, interrupted in the middle of a dissertation on the prospects of the fishing season at Maryut and having failed to strike any verbal sparks from me, asked me to write him "*une petite composition sur le cheval*," which he pronounced to be "*très faible*" putting me down for V B. Mr. Winn, the mathematics master, a double-first from Cambridge and a highly nervous person, was in a towering rage when I was ushered into his presence. He turned on me with the fury destined for his late victim, and the staggering question whether I knew any geometry; and when I had confessed to a total ignorance of that science and of its sister Algebra as well, he promptly asked me to tell him how many poles there were in a rood; and I, feeling the fate of the cosmos to depend on my answer, gave the wrong figure, and saw the cosmos crash. Mr. Winn heartily concurred with Monsieur Dumont in consigning me to the ignominious depths of V B.

It seemed as though it was going to take me a very long time to fulfil the Headmaster's encouraging prophecy. I was deeply mortified. I was also furious. Didn't I know English and Arabic well? Hadn't I read Walter Scott and a hundred other English books? And yet all I had been asked so far was to write a miserable composition in French on an uninspiring domestic animal, and how many poles there were in a rood, as if anybody knew or cared about these ridiculous tables.

My fury was to subside quickly, for I was taken next to see Mr. Reed. I showed off before him to make up for my two previous reverses. I complained of Mr. Winn; I denounced English arithmetic tables, and deplored Monsieur Dumont's lack of imagination in the choice of composition subjects. I was, I think, altogether very objectionable. But Mr. Reed was very kind, and he saw that I knew English well and was fairly advanced in general knowledge. He raised me to VI B. I should have private lessons in French and Mathematics, he said, for a term or two, and I would get on all right.

CHAPTER XIV

NEW LOYALTIES

MY father and mother had gone, and I, feeling homesick and disillusioned, was closely adhering to Albert Kfouri, to whom I had been introduced by his father a few moments before, and who was therefore a rock of comfort to me in this sea of crowded loneliness. He was tall, he was familiar with everybody, proprietorial about everything, a cheerful, confidence-inspiring companion. He put one arm through mine, and with the other, as he piloted me through groups of boys, slapped everybody who happened to come within our orbit on the back.

A stocky, atheltic-looking boy, with ruffled hair, came along asking boys if they wanted to play football, and jotting down their names. I asked Kfouri who he was when he had gone.

" Oh, that's the Head Boy of the School, and Captain of the First Eleven," he answered; " a very nice chap, and plays soccer awfully well; his name is Amin Osman."

" He's a Moslem, then? " I commented in some surprise.

" Oh, yes, but Good Lord, nobody takes any notice of that here. We're all just Victorians." One obviously didn't—an Egyptian Moslem Head of the School and Captain of the XI! It was indeed a new world I was living in. Its values were quite strange to me. Although in the Sudan I had got rid of the religious hatreds and fears of Beyrouth, I had not been entirely freed from my aversion to the Moslems; and as for the Egyptians I had always gathered that they were a servile people. I had not looked forward with enthusiasm to the prospect of meeting Egyptian boys at Victoria College—and here was the Captain of the school an Egyptian Moslem, admired by the boys, liked by the masters.

At dinner I sat opposite Kfouri. I made a ball of bread and threw it at him. It missed him and hit a boy next to him. He was about to scowl at me, when I smiled and said: " Sorry." So he smiled and we began to talk. His name was something-something-yan. It was several days before I could remember the something-something which was Tchaylak. He was, that is to say, an Armenian.

I was posted to a dormitory in the " Flat." The " Flat " was a whole floor in a big private building close to the school, rented to serve as a dormitory annexe. The dormitories in it were just large rooms and therefore quite small for dormitories, holding only five or six beds each. We were five in ours: two Copts from Upper Egypt, bearing, the somewhat exotic names of Alphonse and William, a Maltese called

Carbonaro, but known as "Malty," Kfouri and myself. The Housemaster was Mr. Reed, and every evening he used to make the round of the dormitories, staying ten or fifteen minutes in each, sitting on the edge of one of the beds, talking and joking; and the boys used to group round him, and ask questions and talk freely and laugh and thoroughly enjoy themselves. For the first few nights I felt out of it, though he used to speak to me as much as to any of the others. He knew the others all from the year or years before, and they had so many memories in common. They would be often saying to him, "Do you remember, sir?" or "Wasn't it funny, sir . . .", days and events with which I had nothing to do, and the memory of which was so dear to them. Would the time ever come when I should join in such reminiscences? Should I ever become so intimate and familiar with the school, a chronicler of its past, a pundit of its traditions? Perhaps. Was not there a time when Kfouri, and Malty, and even the great Amin Osman were all new and felt as I did now—homesick strangers? And how happy they were now! Of that there could be no doubt; they liked the school tremendously; they seemed to be all bound together by a great family affection for it—for Mr. Lias and Mr. Reed, and the old buildings, and the memory of happy episodes, and Mr. Bolton, the steward, and Mr. Treen, the carpenter, and the famous "Kufta" of Friday dinners. I felt all this, but for some time continued to be homesick; hated to admit the complete breach with the past which my coming to school really implied. I had been, it seemed now, very happy at Omdurman, during those four years of the War with my father and mother, my books and the "Uncles" and the War news. And all that was gone and would never come back again. The irrecoverable past was whispering in my ears its magnetic farewells.

In Prep. I sat next to Tchay, who was very weak in mathematics. One evening, before we had been at school a week, I allowed him to copy from me the solution of a problem; and though in the Maths. class we sat far apart from each other, the keen eye of Mr. Winn detected the fraud. We were packed off immediately to see Mr. Lias. Hassan, the secretary, attended in case there were to be any executions. Mr. Lias, bending the stick between his hands, looked at us in turn with his piercing, magnified eyes.

"Mr. Winn reports you for cheating," he said. My friend confessed, gallantly taking all the blame on himself.

"You mustn't cheat," said Mr. Lias, fixing me with his eyes.

"But I didn't cheat, sir," I said indignantly. "I only allowed him to copy from me."

"You are just as guilty," he snapped out sharply, "we have a proverb in English which says, 'to help a thief is as bad as to steal'; and you helped the thief." a little

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too big for the stick," he said, " but you," turning on me with a connoisseur's appraisal, " are just the right size for it."

I went red in the face.

" Don't get angry," he said, " or I'll cane you."

" I'm not angry, sir."

" Well, then, I'll let you off this time, both of you; but don't do it again."

Mr. Lias, who was a good Arabic scholar, used to give us translation lessons. One afternoon when we were reading with him a book of Arab history, he referred to a contemporary event in England, and asked: " Who was the great English Baron of that time? " Silence. Out came the question a second time. Timidly I looked at the faces of the other boys. Silence. Then I heard myself saying " Simon de Montfort."

" Yes," said Mr. Lias, " and where did he die? "

" At the battle of Evesham," I said, pronouncing it " Avysham."

" We call it ' Eevesham,' " said Mr. Lias. " Very good." Then he turned on the other boys: " Shame on you boys! A new boy coming straight from home knows English history better than you! Shame on you."

Dreams come true! That scene I had often produced in my imagination had come off on the stage, and with what *éclat*! I had impressed with my knowledge of English history not Mr. Reed, but the Headmaster himself.

I wrote to my mother about it. It was the first letter I wrote home. I wanted to post it early in the morning, but had no stamps. I saw a tall, handsome, well-dressed Egyptian boy, walking up and down the playground, reading a book. I knew that he was in the Sixth Form, and Left Back in the 1st XI. But I took my courage in both hands and asked him if he had a stamp which he could let me have. He very affably said he had and could. I offered him the price, but he declined, saying he was prepared to give stamps but not to sell them. He talked to me for a few moments and I felt greatly honoured by this new connection. His name was Malek Hanna.

Soon I ceased to feel the need of being with Kfouri all the time. The voices of the past were growing silent. I was really beginning to enter into my new life; I was beginning to move freely and familiarly about, to greet and be greeted with smiles. The steward and carpenter, and even the servants knew me by name now. Boys called out to me across the playgrounds. All round I felt that I was blossoming into a recognized individual personality out of the colourless unrecognizable human fraction of the first few days. I had been at first afraid that the boys would not like me, but I had been wrong. I was making friends rapidly, friends whom I liked very much—Armenians, Greeks, Egyptians, Syrians, Jews, Maltese. We were all like one big family.

The prejudices with which I had come against Egyptians and Moslems were vanishing; I was living in a new world where the barriers that had seemed so natural and formidable in that outside world in which I had lived till then, did not exist, seemed absurdly unreal. There were absolutely no distinctions here between one nationality and another, this creed and that. We were all treated as equals; there was not the slightest feeling of either racial or religious prejudice. "Good Lord," Kfouri had said. "Nobody takes any notice of that sort of thing here," and every day I was realizing more and more how true this was. Whatever your colour, nationality or creed, it seemed, you did not feel in any way inferior to anybody else, and in a very short time you ceased to be at all conscious of there being any kind of difference between you and the others. Egyptian boys, Moslem boys were prefects and members of the 1st XI—that Olympian institution in the eyes of every new schoolboy. They soon came to be my worshipped heroes through their exploits against foreign teams. When, on Saturday afternoon, the whole school came out and lined round the football grounds, chanting in rhythmic chorus that stirring song of encouragement "Buck up, College," while the eleven heroes, with V. C. emblazoned on their shirts, fought like Titans for the great glory of the school, what did it matter, or who cared to know whether so-and-so was an Egyptian or a Syrian, or a South Pacific islander? Or when Mr. Reed came round on his evening visits to the dormitory, and we all grouped round him and talked and laughed, who felt that he was an Egyptian or an Armenian talking to an English master? I had heard that the English despised the Egyptians, and the Egyptians hated the English—but here there was no hatred or contempt. There was affection, friendliness, respect—yes, but that of a pupil for his master, and not of an Easterner for an Englishman, of a subject for his ruler. It was very pleasant to discover that there was no barrier of nationality between me and Mr. Reed or the other English masters.

The great day dawned. That afternoon we were playing the Jesuits. The Jesuits were our traditional enemies; we disliked them intensely; they deserved to be disliked. All the nobler ingredients of the sporting spirit were legitimately discarded when we played them. It was a battle unto death, plunging home with foils unbutted. Everybody felt like that about them. Had not Mr. Lias himself once promised the school a half-holiday if they made five goals against them?

For a week I had been hearing about the coming battle. We had lost against them the year before, and were all out to avenge that defeat Our chances were thought to be very bright, an exceptionally strong 1st XI which had opened the season with two sensational victories, and was soaring to great heights of self-confidence. Moreover, scouts, discreetly reconnoitring in the neighbourhood of the Jesuits' play-

ground of a Saturday afternoon, had reported certain encouraging weaknesses in the enemy's ranks.

We were playing on their grounds, but the whole school was going to see the match. Cheering would not be lacking; the air was heavy with moral support, which in certain eventualities might become physical. We started soon after lunch, a long cavalcade blocking up the street. Mr. Lias was going with us, in his black suit and straw hat, lending the inspiring influence of his presence to the occasion. Even Monsieur Dumont, who was indifferent to the attractions of football as a spectacle, was there, puffing at his pipe, swinging his familiar cane by his side. He indeed, as French master, had special reasons for hating the Jesuits, who were competing with him in teaching Egypt French. Loyalty to the school, therefore, reinforced by professional jealousy, made of him on these occasions a very bellicose spectator.

I walked with Tchay, Kfouri and Malty, close behind the eleven warriors on whom the honour of the school depended that afternoon. We arrived, we lined round the grounds; we saw sinister-looking priests, walking up and down. Our hatred went out to them—*à bas les Jesuites!* . . . They've kicked off. Buck up, College! Amin has got the ball . . . he's running with it, he's passed it to Sarofeem . . . a long straight shot . . . a gasp, just missed. "Hard luck," says the deep resonant voice of Mr. Lias. A Jesuit father passes near us. "*Sales Jesuites*," says Malty at my side . . . They've got the ball now; a short quick fellow is running along with it. Damn him, he's outdribbled Sarofeem. My blood boils with anger. I hate the ittle brute; I could kick him. On him, Amin, on him! I'd love to see him on the ground. Amin is on him. They clash and Amin falls. The nasty Jesuit is still winning. Will no one bring him down? Yes, Safwat, come on, Safwat . . . Well played, sir! Well played, sir! Buck up, College; Buck up, College; Buck up, Collllllege, yes, yes, yes—Goal! A frenzy of exultation. Even Mr. Lias is pale with excitement. He says "Well played." I slap Tchay on the back. Malty is crying himself hoarse with cheers.

We won by three goals to nil, and returned to school, a triumphant, exuberant procession.

New loyalties for old; new hatreds for old—Moslems, Germans, Jesuits. Under the unifying roof of a common school, the Moslem Egyptian, Amin Osman, was dearer to me now than all the Syrian Christians of the world.

CHAPTER XV

ENGLAND VERSUS EGYPT

WE were at breakfast when the rumour began to spread. Dayboys, coming early on purpose, brought it with them, invaded the dining-hall with it. The War was over; the armistice was being signed that morning. We ran outside. The masters had not arrived yet, but the entrance hall was crowded with boys, bustling, chattering. The occasion obviously called for a whole holiday. Several boys had brought with them confetti and paper streamers. Mr. Reed was the first to arrive. A tremendous cheer greeted him; we grouped round him, excited, asking questions. We must have a holiday. How soon should we be moving back to our own buildings?

And then Mr. Lias was seen coming down the stairs from his flat. Cheers and more cheers, and still more cheers; and a chorus of "whole holiday, whole holiday!" broke out. Confetti and streamers showered on him, caught his straw hat, dotted his black coat. Arms waved, caps and hats were thrown up in the air. Whole holiday, whole holiday!

"All right, all right," said Mr. Lias, beaming, "have your whole holiday."

"Three cheers for Mr. Lias!" called out Amin Osman, and we responded with a deafening roar. Whole holiday! Armistice!

So the War had ended! How excitedly I had greeted its beginning, four years ago. How dim now in my ears was the memory of the referee's kick-off whistle! That arbiter had now blown his full-time blast, and the players, bruised and muddy, and panting and unheroic, were coming off the ground, a line of exhausted stragglers. There had been really no score at all; the game had just been stopped. And, for some time, my interest in it had been growing fainter and fainter.

New interests had supplanted it in my life; other aspects of England's greatness than military prowess were now claiming my admiration; and the War had ended—well, that was that.

New loyalties. In class we were doing Shakespeare and Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* and Bacon's *Essays*—new, inspiring names; new standards of the heroic. English poetry was beginning to sound its magic notes in my ears. The art and thought of England, her cultural achievements, her moral Waterloos were now casting their spell on me in succession to her physical heroism and military triumphs.

And all these new glories and loyalties centred in the person of Mr. Reed, to whom, as I had anticipated when I first saw his name in the prospectus, I was rapidly becoming attached by the strongest bonds of adolescent affection and admiration. He took us in history and

English literature, and every moment of every hour he taught us was a treat. By the end of my first term he had become my hero and oracle; his opinions were mine, his likes and dislikes. What he believed in I accepted unquestioningly as the truth. What he did not believe in I repudiated with equal conviction as falsehoods. For how could Mr. Reed be wrong? I strove hard to win his approbation, and was immensely happy when I realized that he was beginning to take a special interest in me. One day, being ill in the dormitory, and moved by the twin circumstances of loneliness and sickness to sentimental meditation, I began to write a poem about that remote time when I was a boy of seven. I showed it to Mr. Reed when he came to see me. Some of the lines were incomplete or lame; the rhymes did not all rhyme; but he was very encouraging and said he would put it in the school magazine, when it had been touched up a little. So it was really poetry I had written! Emboldened I wrote more poems, and always took the results to Mr. Reed, who criticized, completed, encouraged. He also lent me books from his private library, discussed them with me when I had read them, and took me to tea at a place in the town. I no longer felt a stranger during his nightly visits to the dormitory. It was so stimulating to hear his brisk, sharp footsteps resounding on the marble floor of the flat, and know that he was coming on his round, tall, erect, full of energy and the zest of life, to give us a few minutes of brilliant talk and merry laughter.

Mr. Reed was a Conservative. He did not believe in revolutions. I felt ashamed of myself for having admired the French Revolution. He believed in slow progress, and aristocracy, and expediency and Burke. He disapproved of Democracy and the Rights of Man and demagogues, and the Press and the Cinema. So I believed in slow progress and aristocracy and expediency and Burke; and disapproved of the Rights of Man and Democracy, and the Cinema and the Press.

My nascent and second-hand political philosophy was soon to come up against the test of reality. One day, on coming down from the flat in the morning, we saw crowds of people, all Egyptians, clustering in seething congestion on all the tramcars in the streets. No hats were visible; only tarbooshes, tilted at disorderly angles—masses of them. And the men that wore them, scowling menacingly, waved their hands and shouted slogans. From among these perambulating choruses we could catch at intervals the refrain "Long live Saad, Long live Saad."

At the school we met the Dayboys, our daily reporters of current news. A revolution, they said, had broken out, an Egyptian national revolution against the English. Zaghlul Pasha and two other Egyptian politicians had called on the British High Commissioner to ask that Egypt should be represented at the Peace Conference, but the British, instead of allowing these Pashas to proceed to Paris, had arrested and sent them off to Malta. And this was Egypt's retort—a rising all over

the country. Fourteen million people, in town and village; the highly educated and the illiterate; descendants of Turkish aristocrats and native peasants, opening one huge mouth and telling England something they had never dared breathe before; and in some places, apparently, accompanying this vocal declaration with the appropriate action. There were demonstrations and street fights between the demonstrators and the police. There were shouts of "Down with England," and "Long live Saad," all the way from Alexandria to Asswan.

I was amazed. Egypt had risen; the Egyptians whom I had learned to imagine as a submissive people, bowing their knees to their English rulers, afraid, hating and flattering, had at last revolted. How many times had I heard people say that the Egyptians lacked spirit, and would go on accepting subjection till the end of time? Now, I could hear them shouting loudly in the streets, shouting without fear, "Down with England." And a few days later the machine-guns were turned on them by the British troops and many of them were killed, but they went on shouting.

But my sympathies, in spite of my friendship with Egyptian boys, were not with the revolution. I did not really identify my Egyptian friends at school with this unattractive rabble shouting in the streets. My Egyptian friends were, like me, civilized boys. They discoursed on English history and quoted Shakespeare. At school they avoided politics. They still came regularly to school, while practically all other Egyptian students in the town had gone on strike; and their relations with the English masters remained very friendly. Their sympathies were to a certain extent with the revolution, but their allegiance was divided; and their upbringing in the atmosphere of an English Public School rendered them unsusceptible to the appeal of such unseemly things as rowdy demonstrations and street fights. Besides, if my going to Victoria College had brought me into intimate touch with Egyptian boys and made me like them, it had also strengthened my love of everything English, and the revolution was a movement against England. It was a challenge to Mr. Reed and his political convictions; it was wrong. The Egyptians could not govern themselves. To parade in the streets and shout and smash windows was just stupid. There was no sincerity in the movement; only agitation and hooliganism. This, I was sure, was Mr. Reed's view of it. He did not express it in so many words, but I could feel it in the tone of his voice, the expression of his eyes, and in the casual words that dropped from him. I remember going to have tea with him in town the day of the funeral of the first victims of the riots. We had not known that the funeral was going to pass before the shop where we were having tea. Suddenly, a hum came on the wind, and the street swelled up with people, angrily mournful. Then we saw the coffins pass one after the other, draped

in black, borne on the shoulders of the crowd. I looked at Mr. Reed. Every feature in his face uttered disapproval. So I disapproved too.

Later Mr. Reed talked more explicitly about it. The movement was not in any real sense a national rising. The vast majority of the people of Egypt were illiterate fellaheen, who were not interested in politics, and were very happy under British rule. They had been worked up to an artificial excitement by agitators. At the top of the movement there were demagogues in search of power and popularity; at the bottom, the riff-raff of the towns; while the best people in the country kept out of it, and secretly desired the continuance of British rule.

This seemed to me very convincing. Zaghlul was a demagogue; demagogues were insincere. The whole thing was an unseemly noise in the streets, made by a rabble. How could I side with this rabble, dirty, uneducated, Oriental, against England, and Shakespeare and Mr. Reed? I took it for granted that my Egyptian school friends belonged to that postulated saner and more respectable section of the nation that was at heart in favour of the continuance of the British occupation. Actually I never at that time discovered their real feelings, everybody maintaining at school an attitude of tactful reticence.

CHAPTER XVI

SCHOOL VERSUS HOME.

MY happiness at school that first year carried its own poison with it in the knowledge, growing more bitter every month, that it was soon to be cut short. The War was over now and my mother was going back, the following year, to live in Beyrouth and wanted me to go with her and continue my education as a day student at the American University there. I could not very well resist this decision. As long as the War had lasted and my mother had been compelled to stay in the Sudan where there was no school to which I could go, my case for going to Victoria College had been unassailable. But now it was different. If my mother went to live in Beyrouth the natural thing was for me to live with her and seek my education there. She would like it better and it would be cheaper for my father. I could not insist on staying at Victoria College merely to satisfy a personal inclination, nor could I argue that Victoria College would be better for me if I wanted to complete my education in England. Nothing had been whispered yet about such a possibility. It was an aspiration that I hardly dared to acknowledge to myself, so forbiddingly ambitious it seemed, so certain to arouse the strongest opposition from my mother. So there was nothing for me but to acquiesce in my parents' decision. But I felt miserable about it. I had never liked Beyrouth and I hated the idea of going back to live in it, even though the Turks had gone and Syria was to be now under French protection. The memory of my childhood days there still filled me with gloom. The dirty narrow streets, the slimy gutters, the women in black, the atmosphere of Oriental squalor—these would be still there, even if the fear of persecution was no more. I did not want to leave Alexandria and go back to all that. Alexandria was a modern, westernized city. Its streets and buildings, its population, its intellectual atmosphere belonged more to Europe than to the East. And if I was loath to exchange Alexandria for Beyrouth, I was a hundred times more loath to exchange Victoria College for the American University. With every month, with every term my attachment to the school, to the boys and the lessons and the books and Mr. Lias and Mr. Reed, had grown until by the end of the year it had become a great love, a passion of adolescence that filled me with happiness, and with misery at the thought that I should have to say good-bye to it all so soon and for ever.

In this sentimental mood, I seized upon the chance of taking with me a memento of the school and of English education, a piece of paper that should serve as a permanent link between me and all that I was

leaving—the Oxford and Cambridge Lower Certificate. The Lower Certificate was taken in the form below mine, but as several of the boys who had gone in for it the year before had failed they were sitting for it again from VI B, and to my delight Mr. Reed said I could go in for it too if I liked. A scholarship of fifty pounds, the blue ribbon of the school, was awarded on the results to the most successful candidate under sixteen, and I was under sixteen; but this aspect of the matter could not interest me, since to win the scholarship you had to come back to the school the following year and I was not coming back. Still, it would be enough to pass and get the certificate. The examinations were to be held in the school's own buildings, now vacated by the Army, but only the certificate candidates were going there that year so that my only chance of seeing life in these buildings, the school's real home about which I had heard so much from the older boys, was to sit for the certificate, and this was another strong inducement. Even a fortnight there would strengthen my title to regard myself for ever after as a genuine Old Boy.

The end of the year came. The school broke up and we, the certificate candidates, with Mr. Reed, and Mr. Lias and Mr. Bolton the steward, and Mr. Treen the carpenter moved to the buildings at Victoria. It was an intimate family party. There were a few Higher Certificate candidates headed by Amin Osman, a large contingent for the School Certificate and a smaller contingent for the "Lower," including my best friends in VI B. We all lived together in the Headmaster's flat. In the mornings and afternoons we did the examinations; we sat in the big Art Room and Mr. Reed walked round distributing the awe-inspiring printed papers bearing the awe-inspiring legend "Oxford and Cambridge Joint Examinations Board—Lower Certificate." In the evenings we sat on Mr. Lias's balcony looking out on the Mediterranean, and Mr. Reed and Mr. Lias came and sat with us, and we discussed the day's papers and how well we had done on them. Amin Osman and the other Higher Certificate boys who were going to England after the examinations, talked about their plans, and Mr. Reed and Mr. Lias answered their eager questions about the journey and England and the Colleges they were going to at Oxford and Cambridge. I listened fascinated but with a deep ache in my heart. Their destiny was not mine. For them the great world of the West, England, Oxford and Cambridge. For me, Beyrouth.

The examinations were over at last. With a spirit heavy as lead with the sadness of an inexorable and final parting I said good-bye to the school and left to join my parents in Cairo on the way to Syria.

Pleasure at the prospect of seeing my parents and sister again was not unmixed. Apart from my sadness at leaving the school, I had a feeling of spiritual remoteness from my parents and the home life I was going back to. I had been away from home for nine months,

which seemed like nine years measured by my inward experience. So much had happened in my mind during those nine months to which my parents were strangers and would, I felt, remain strangers. I had so many new interests which they could not share with me, standards to which they did not conform. My standards, my values, were now those of Mr. Reed, English standards and values, and that accentuated the conflict which I had begun to experience even before I left home between our native Syrian life and the English ideal to which I was beginning to aspire. What, for instance, would Mr. Reed or Mr. Lias think if they came to see us one day and found my father in his caftan, like any Egyptian Omda, like Zakariya the laundryman at school? What would they think of me if they arrived when we were having lunch and saw me eating Kobeiba with raw onions? I was very fond of Kobeiba and raw onions, and looked forward to eating it again at home, but felt ashamed of my desire. Judged by what I believed to be Mr. Reed's standards, the raw onion seemed to me now to be a coarse, vulgar vegetable, and I shuddered to think of him catching me one day with a slice of it in my hand, no matter how elegantly cut and shaped. If I had only known at that time that spring onions were eaten in England in the uncooked state, that Mr. Reed himself had eaten them on occasions, what a burden would have been lifted off my mind!

Intellectually, spiritually, English history, English literature and especially English poetry was now the world in which I lived and for which I felt homesick in an Arabic environment, and in this world my father and mother, though they were not strangers were, I knew, mere visitors, not patriotic citizens and permanent dwellers like myself.

But more estranging than all these things was the gulf that had opened up between me and my mother, specially in the matter of religion and morality. The change had begun before I left home, nor was it complete by the end of my first year at school, but it had gone far enough to make me feel that I was crossing an ocean towards a new shore.

For some time before I went to school doubt had begun assailing my mind. The first shock had come when I heard of Uncle Selim for the first time. Uncle Selim was an evolutionist, in the days when evolutionists were honest and unsophisticated fellows who repudiated God, not having discovered yet the ingenuity of the modern scientific believer. Uncle Selim had been announced to me long before he arrived in Omdurman, as " a man who did not believe in God." My mother had shuddered as she uttered the words, causing a sinister picture to arise in my mind, as of some monster. But Uncle Selim, even my mother admitted, was in all other respects a good and normal man. His only failing, I understood, was that instead of believing in God, who had told us that we were descended from a handful of dust and spit, he believed in a bad man called Darwin, who said that we

were descended from monkeys. I had therefore been very curious to see what Uncle Selim, a man who held such fearful convictions, looked like. In some vague way I had expected his physical appearance to betray some recognizable sign of his inward monstrosity. Then Uncle Selim had arrived. I scrutinized him intently. No cloven hoof was visible in his face. Quickly we became friends. My first horror of his beliefs rapidly turned into an interest in them, but an interest still very much on the defensive, on the major issue of God. Who was Darwin? What exactly had he said? Was it not possible to believe in him and God at once? Uncle Selim said it might be, so I added Darwin to my creed. But the partnership did not get on smoothly. Doubts began to gather about the Senior Partner. The resurrection of the body worried me in particular. One might possibly conceive a well-preserved skeleton, in an intact tomb, responding to the trumpet call. But how about somebody who was devoured by lions or burned to a cinder (in both of which forms of extinction Christian martyrs had extensively and, as it now seemed to me, unwisely indulged)? And anyhow, what would happen to the resurrected body if it encountered fire or flood? Would all the laws of the universe be revised so that it should be safe?

These speculations which I ruthlessly followed for hours every day had led me to the conclusion that the resurrection of the body was an extremely doubtful matter. And then I came up face to face against the appalling fear of extinction. If bodily resurrection seemed improbable, spiritual survival, divorced from matter, was to me inconceivable. I was in a panic. A dark cloud, the shadow of annihilation, enveloped me completely, blotting out all the joy of life, settling down with an almost solid presence between me and all my interests, my books, my friends, my father and mother and sister, making them all seem pitiably evanescent and unreal. I would lie awake for hours in my bed with this inescapable fear gnawing at my mind, writhing in pyjamas made clammy with cold sweat. It was very much like my earlier night tortures. The atmosphere, the feeling, were the same; only whereas before it had been the positive fear of God and his displeasure, now it was the blank fear of a God-empty universe, the fear of an unanchored mind in face of the indifferent immensities of Time and Space. I would, sleeping out in the garden, look up at the moon in the vast hush of the night, and shrink with horror to think how many millions of times it had made that journey before I was born, and would make it after I was dead. I would look round at my father and mother and sister, sleeping comfortably beside me, and a picture of marble slabs and crosses in an unbroken silence would arise before me and displace the reality of their beds and blankets and heads on the pillows. And what was I? Could I be real, who a few years before was nothing, and in a few years hence would be nothing again?

After a few weeks of this agony I had rushed back to God and the Bible. I wanted to believe again, to believe everything I had believed before, the resurrection of the body, the whole creed. But I could no longer do it by faith alone. I wanted proof, and it was a curious sort of proof that I sought, a compromise between Authority and Reason. I wanted to know what great philosophers, writers and scientists now and in the past thought about it. Did they believe in God, in Christ, in the resurrection of the body? If they, great minds, believed without proof, so would I. The weight of the evidence I discovered had enabled me to regain a precarious belief for some time, but it had soon begun to slip away from me again. In my second term at school I stopped saying my nightly prayers, feeling as I did so that I was being disloyal to my mother.

My moral upbringing at home had followed severely puritanical lines, traceable, through the Scottish Missions in Syria, to Calvin and John Knox. As a child at home I had learned by precept, by example, and by cumulative inference, to regard such things as playing cards for money and drinking alcohol as being intrinsically wicked, not merely unsuitable for children, and only bad for grown-ups if indulged in as a vice, but bad altogether, bad in the absolute, bad in the eyes of God—even one glass of beer, one game of Bezique for a penny. My father did not drink alcohol, and as for gambling, he had only committed the offence twice in his life, in very special circumstances; and the results, in both cases eminently moral, held forth a telling lesson for me. On the first occasion, retribution, swift and sure, had followed. My father had been sitting watching two friends playing tric-trac for money. One of them being called away, asked my father to finish the game for him. My father did so and won. His friend insisted on giving him half the winnings, and on his refusing the offer, bought him a bottle of eau-de-Cologne with his share of the prize-money. My father prevailed on his conscience to accept this compromise, and took the bottle home, but then higher powers intervened. The bottle, unopened, slipped from his hands and was shattered. On the second occasion we were all celebrating New Year's Eve at my aunt's house in Khartoum. There was a large number of unholy guests, one of whom had brought a roulette with him, much to the consternation of my mother and aunt. New Year's Eve frivolity, however, championed by my uncle, carried the day, and the diabolical game was allowed. My father was induced to try his luck. I (nearly fifteen) was bursting with curiosity to see the game, but I was afraid that if I tried to I might be snubbed, so I remained alone out on the verandah the whole time the fun was going on—a gesture which was interpreted by my mother and aunt as indicating the right spirit, that is to say, a spontaneous and righteously uncompromising condemnation of gambling, and won me warm praise. My father, much against his will, won a few shillings.

Early the next morning I heard my mother begging him not to let this ill-gotten gain remain in his pocket for long. He replied that he had already distributed it among the servants.

As for drinking, my father used often to tell a story of how when he was seventeen he was invited to attend a cousin's wedding in another village, and of how before he left my grandfather had said to him: "My boy, you are now going to a wedding; there will be drinking; all your cousins and friends will drink wine. I want you to promise me that you won't taste it," and of how he had promised and kept his word. Naturally I was expected to live up to the same standard of heroism; naturally I would.

But these sins, in spite of their intrinsic wickedness, were comparatively light. There was one that overshadowed them all, the One, the Sin of Sins, Sex. Sex, I gradually imbibed the notion, was altogether something to be ashamed of, a thing to be kept in the dark. In the bonds of holy matrimony, it might become just permissible, a sort of legalized offence; but outside those precincts, even a kiss was a pretty scarlet affair, unless with a view to immediate marriage. My father was thirty-three years old when he married my mother, and he had never kissed a woman before her. I knew that there were "Bad Women," and men who did "Bad Things" with them, and invariably got fearful diseases. I also knew that certain naughty things happened between naughty men and women who were not quite bad women, but whose conduct was highly reprehensible.

The net result of all these influences had been to develop in my mind a general and acute feeling of shame about the whole subject of sex, sex in all its aspects, legitimate and illegitimate. It had seemed to me that even when you were married you could not approach the matter save in an apologetic manner. In my first days at school I was too shy even to mention girls. I felt greatly embarrassed when my friends talked about their girl friends. Kfouri had a "flame" in the town, to whom he wrote and from whom he received letters. He told me about her. I let him understand that I did not approve of such things. In my second term I made a vigorous speech in the Debating Society in favour of single life, reinforcing my original contribution to the subject with profuse and powerful quotations from the essays of Bacon and Lamb, which we were doing in class, and concluding with an appeal to my audience to let their reason and not their passions decide the issue between me and the honourable opposer. My audience, triumphing over their passions, recorded a verdict in my favour by a majority of 20 to 10; and Mr. Reed reported my speech in the School Magazine as "a feast of reason, providing not only vast quantities of Bacon, but also a very choice piece of Lamb!"

My one year at school, however, had brought about a great change in me. All these inhibitions had dropped away one by one. This

liberation I owed to the salutary influence of an Armenian boy, called Meguerditchian, who is still one of my best friends. Meg was an excellent fellow, and a completely emancipated, but by no means dissipated, young individual. To you, dear Meg, I owe one of the greatest debts of my life, my liberation in thought and deed from my puritan taboos, my escape from Calvin and John Knox, my first cigarette, my first glass of beer, my first game of poker, and the self-confidence of a free agent. At that time I rather thought that you were an evil influence in my life, but now, I know better.

CHAPTER XVII

ONLY AN INTERLUDE

I HAD been away from Syria for five years, and though the memory of Beyrouth and the prospect of living in it again filled me with gloom, I found the immediate experience of arriving in the Lebanon and seeing the mountains of my childhood again thrilling beyond all expectation. For five years I had dwelt in the plains, in sandy deserts and a scorching atmosphere most of the time. I had almost forgotten the existence of nature, the shape and colour of mountains, the feeling of height and the intoxicating bite of mountain air. We had travelled by the new Palestine-Damascus route, avoiding Beyrouth altogether, and as the train, climbing laboriously from the interior, reached the summits of the mountain and I began to read the names of the familiar old villages and see the red roofs grouped cosily between the stretching vineyards and the sloping pine woods, I forgot my homesickness for the school and my loathing for Beyrouth in an immediate ecstasy of sensuous enjoyment and lyrical feeling. At Suk-el-Gharb my grandfather Ibrahim and my aunts and our relatives and friends in the village, were waiting to meet us after our long absence and their terrible experience of the war. This too was thrilling, the friendly old faces, a little older though still familiar after five years, the happy smiles, the eager flow of greetings. They had been through a dreadful time, besieged, cut off from the money that used to come to them from their sons in America and Africa in the days before the War. They had lived under the oppression of Djemal Pasha. They had gone hungry and seen people die from hunger around them in the streets. They had known despair, and when despair was blackest they had seen salvation and wept with joy as the British troops marched into the land at the heels of the fleeing Turks. They had all this to tell us about, and it was all as exciting as anything I had read in books, especially that last story about my grandfather and the British officer a few days after the occupation. My uncle, who was at that time working with the British military authorities in Palestine, had given his chiefs his father's name and address in the Lebanon and asked that when the army entered the country enquiries might be made about him and any help given him of which he might be in need. A few days after the occupation, my grandfather was walking along the village street when he saw a British army car stop a few yards ahead of him and an officer get out and speak to some men standing outside a shop. Then he saw the men pointing in his direction and the officer coming forward to meet him, and one of the men called out " Muallim Ibrahim, this officer wants to see you."

The poor old man, having lived in constant fear for four years and been threatened once with arrest by the Turks because his son was known to be working with the British in the Sudan, was for a moment frightened, though this was a British officer and not a Turk. He could not dream how he had become known to the British army nor why a British officer should want to see him. But he did not have long to wait for an explanation. In a moment the officer was speaking to him, telling him that he had instructions, given at the request of his son who was well and working with the British army in Palestine, to find out if he was in need of any help and to do anything he could for him. Did he need money, food or a car to take him down to Beyrouth? The old man was so overcome with emotion that he could only mumble tear-choked thanks. It was the greatest moment in his life. England delivering Syria from the Turks, and a British officer, the representative of England, the symbol of that deliverance, coming to him personally to give him help and protection. What more glorious fulfilment could any man, could any Syrian Protestant in particular, wish for his dreams? St. George had killed the dragon and was bowing gallantly to the liberated maiden.

But by the summer of 1919 the Protestants, the Greek Orthodox, the Moslems, the Druses and indeed some of the Maronites were feeling disappointed. The British had gone and left the Lebanon to the French, and the French were becoming rapidly unpopular even with those who had wanted them and voted for a French mandate. They were, of course, very unpopular with me. I resented their presence. I was very glad that the Turks had gone, but I had wanted England not France to take Syria and the Lebanon under her wings. In Egypt, in Palestine, on the way, I had felt happy, at home, under British rule. In the Lebanon I felt the presence of an alien dominion, French officers, French Sengalese soldiers, French signposts. The country was still in a state of confusion from the effects of the war; there was a good deal of disorder, inefficiency, dirt in the streets. All these I attributed to French rule. If only the British had been there, there would have been none of this. There would have been perfect order, efficient services, no mosquitoes, no dead rats in the streets.

Not everybody among our acquaintance, however, was pro-British. An old friend of my father's was indeed the very reverse, and knowing what my feelings were he used to like baiting me. One day he said to me: "I want to know why you are so fond of the British. They are the most selfish people in the world. They are absolute utilitarians. They make use of you as long as they need you, then they drop you just as you throw away a squeezed lemon. They have no conscience when their advantage is at stake. Look at the Opium War, you who've done history, or perhaps they don't tell you the truth in English books. Look at Egypt. How many times have they solemnly declared that the

occupation was a temporary affair, and they are still there after forty years and will never leave unless they're driven out by force. Give me a single instance, if you can, of honesty or genuine humanitarianism in British policy."

I was furious with him. I hit back fiercely. He did not know history. He distorted the facts. Of course there was honesty and humanitarianism in British policy. William Wilberforce. The abolition of slavery; England paying twenty million pounds compensation to the slave-owners; the sacrifice of money for an ideal. Burke impeaching Warren Hastings for having oppressed the people of India. Palmerston helping the Italians in their fight for independence. British statesmen were never deliberately dishonest. The perfidy of England was a myth invented by France, etc., etc. I thought I had crushed him, but he only laughed and said I was a naïve enthusiast, and that I would know better when I had had more experience. For some time after this I looked upon him as almost a personal enemy, though I was otherwise very fond of him, and I eventually dismissed his views on England as a form of inexplicable perverseness.

The thrill I had felt on my arrival wore off rapidly, and as the summer passed and the prospect of Beyrouth and the American University came nearer my homesickness for Victoria College, for British rule and for the European atmosphere of Alexandria grew into a mood of morbid romantic nostalgia. I lost interest in the mountains and their magnificent scenery; I lost all pleasure I had felt the first few days at being again with my people and at meeting, after an absence of five years, some of the friends of my childhood. My only pleasure was writing letters to my school friends at Alexandria, to Mr. Reed in England, and getting letters from them. I used to wait for the post eagerly from day to day, and walk down every morning to the village post office looking forward to the sight of an Egyptian stamp, a familiar handwriting on an envelope. In the evenings I stood on our balcony facing the sea and looked yearningly across the Mediterranean to where Alexandria lay. Soon it would be October, term would begin, Mr. Reed would be back from England, my friends would assemble again at the school to read Shakespeare and follow Mr. Reed through the pages of English history. The old familiar faces would sit again round the classroom, and on the desks before them there would be the "good Verity," as Mr. Reed called him, and Gardiner's *Student's History of England*, and opposite them there would be the inspiring face of Mr. Reed and his inspiring voice in their ears . . . and I would be down there in Beyrouth, at the American University. As a child in Beyrouth I had looked up to the American University with feelings almost of hero worship. My father and uncles and most of the young men of our acquaintance had been educated there, and were very fond of their Alma Mater. From them I had heard great stories about it. I had

often visited it with my father and had admired the lovely campus, the great buildings, yearning for the time when I should be a student there and emulate my father's prowess. But now I saw in it only a detested rival to Victoria College that was claiming me against my will and I conceived a great loathing for it. I felt very much like a man compelled to forsake the woman he loved and marry a stranger. I hated the stranger, I dreaded the approach of the wedding-day. I kept hoping that something might happen at the last moment to save me, but nothing happened. Inexorably the summer passed, we went down to Beyrouth and I was admitted to the University.

If I had felt lonely in my first week at Victoria College the year before I now felt a hundred times more lonely. The University was a big place. I was one of a hundred Freshmen. The lessons were perfunctory, the teachers seemed distant. I felt no human warmth around me. As a day-student I had no share in the more intimate life of the place; not that I wanted anything of the kind. I was in a sullen, resistant mood and I wanted to see of the place as little as possible, and the fact that I was not living in the University helped me to retain my aloofness. At Victoria College I had wanted to escape from my loneliness, to overcome my homesickness, to become a part of the school, a member of the family. But here I had no such desire. I did not feel drawn to the family, and the reason was not entirely that my affections were elsewhere. The family was too Oriental for my taste. There was little European culture or refinement in its life. The students came mostly from unwesternized homes and the American teachers were too few and, as was inevitable in a University, too distant from the students to infuse much western influence into their lives, to create an atmosphere for the students to live in. At Victoria College a good many of the boys came from homes which had a high degree of European culture, and the school was small enough for the English masters to infuse their spirit into its entire life. There I had felt from the first the presence of an atmosphere of English culture around the persons of Mr. Lias and Mr. Reed, an atmosphere of refined values, of civilized behaviour, good taste, moral purpose, humane feeling. And I had felt intensely happy to be in that atmosphere. I had enjoyed every breath of it, feeling that it was quickening my life, lifting me to new planes of living. At the University the atmosphere was made by the students, Syrian and other Arab students, intelligent, virile, but lacking in the culture and refinement which I had learned to appreciate in European civilization, and which I had found at Victoria College.

For much the same reason I hated Beyrouth itself. I found it dirty and coarse. Rubbish heaps stank in the streets; the gutters looked as though they had not been cleared of their slime since my childhood.

Gross men walked about in sirwals and used the walls as urinals. Dead rats lay about on my road to the University, and I saw them in the same places day after day.

Dead rats! Little did I know how much I was going to owe to those ugly rodents, and the sinister work they had been doing. One day when I had been at the University for three weeks, we heard that there were a few cases of bubonic plague in the town. The next day a few more cases were reported, and more still the day after. My mother was scared and began to talk of leaving Beyrouth, if the plague continued, and going back with my father to Khartoum. We were all sitting at home one evening when she threw out this thought for the first time. It flashed out like a gleam of lightning in the darkness of my night; it fell on my ears like an Open Sesame to the gates of Paradise. If my mother went back to Khartoum there would be no reason for me to stay in Beyrouth. I could leave the American University and go back to Victoria College. A quick divorce could be obtained from this woman that had been imposed on me and I could fly back to my love!

The next few days were a time of almost unendurable suspense. The plague fluctuated, my mother wavered, and I, pulled out of my apathy by the sudden dawning of this great hope, seeing this life-belt almost within my reach at the very moment when I thought the end had come, strove with a frenzied effort to reach and clutch it. I mobilized the full resources of my potent ally the plague and launched them at my mother in a continuous attack. I reported to her every new case, every alarmist rumour. I expatiated on the appalling sanitary conditions reigning in Beyrouth, suggesting that small-pox and cholera might follow the plague. I pointed out that it would take at least a year for the after-effects of the war to pass, and that until then Khartoum would be a much safer and more comfortable place for her, and Alexandria for me.

For some time the forces on the two sides were evenly balanced and my mother was unable to make up her mind. On the one hand stood the plague and I, a powerful offensive combination hammering away at her defences. On the other were arrayed the facts that she had made all her plans for staying in Beyrouth, that she wanted to be with me, and that to change her mind and go back to Khartoum would involve many inconveniences. Something was needed to tip the scales, some new factor in the situation, and at the psychological moment it came. It was a letter from Victoria College telling me that I had gained the Lower Certificate and qualified for the Cromer Scholarship which would be awarded to me if I went back to the school. This meant quite a considerable reduction on the fees for two years, and this was a weighty consideration with my father. But more than this, it flattered my father's paternal pride, and even my mother felt that it would be a shame

to deprive me of such a prize. The matter was clinched. We packed up, and a few days later, having telegraphed the school that I was going back, I stood in triumph and joy on the deck of a ship steaming out of Beyrouth harbour bound for Alexandria. Life was sweet again. The future beyond the horizon a glorious vista.

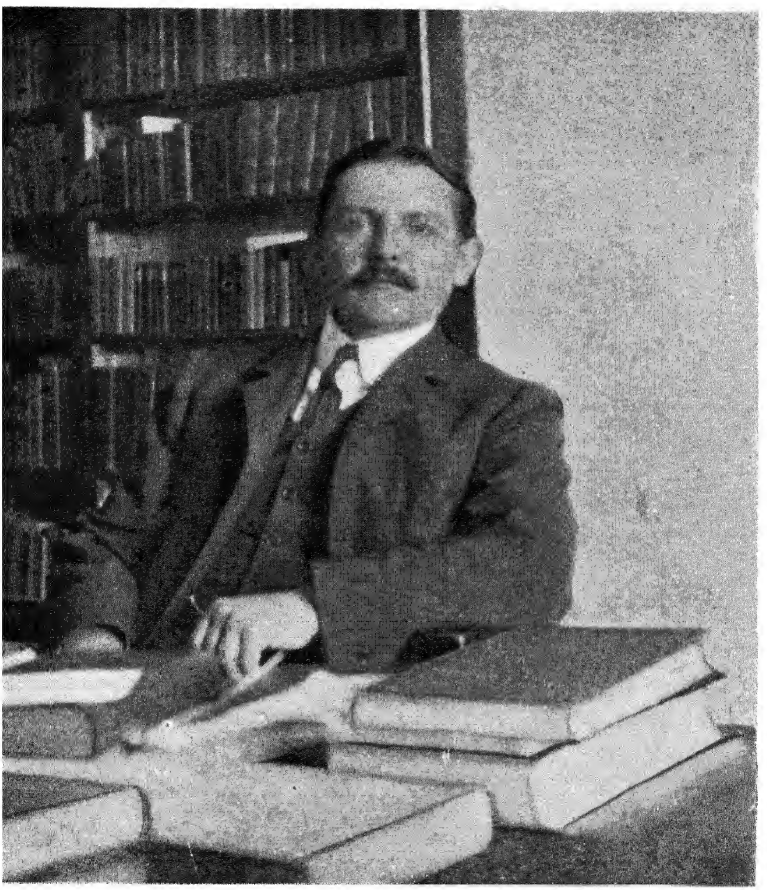
CHAPTER XVIII

THE ROAD TO OXFORD

BACK again at school! Back among the familiar friendly faces of the year before and the familiar friendly books, back in the congenial atmosphere of English history and English literature, in the inspiring company of Mr. Reed, under the kindly paternal eye of Mr. Lias. I came to know Mr. Lias much better in my second year, and to love and admire him as much as I loved and admired Mr. Reed, but in a different way. Mr. Lias was a tremendous personality. He could be terrifying when he was angry. His eyes flashed fire at you and his tongue lashed you with whips of flame; but if his wrath was mighty and intense, so was everything else in him—his humanity, his kindness, his affection, and the boys felt all this and loved him. They loved him most of all for having, despite his years and his position, a streak of boyish fun in his heart that made him call himself "Minimus" in the school magazine, a delightful turn of humour and the capacity to joke and laugh with them at their own level and with unforced mirth.

One day I and a few other boys congregated in the Lending Library, of which I was in charge at the time. Somehow two of the boys had with them tennis rackets and a ball. Somehow we became frivolous, and the library being a hall of noble dimensions, with a large and clear wall at one end, we started hitting the ball against this target and in a moment a frenzied game of pelotte basque was in full swing to the accompaniment of much shouting and cheering, the ball smacking the walls and floor with a sharp cracking sound and bouncing to and fro between rows of bookcases with glass fronts. Before long the inevitable happened. A mighty shot hit the glass and a large pane shivered into a thousand pieces with an appalling noise. Just then we heard a gentle rap on the door, the top half of which was also of glass, and looking round we saw Mr. Lias watching us. We were petrified in our places for a few seconds before whoever was nearest to the door recovered sufficiently to open it. Mr. Lias looked stern. "What a disgraceful display," he said. "Who is in charge of the library?" I told him. "Come and see me to-night in my study," he said, "and report the breakage to Mr. Bolton."

I spent the remainder of the day in uncomfortable anticipation of the coming interview. The offence was not intrinsically very serious. The damage could be easily repaired; a few piastres would pay for it. But the whole thing was so undignified in senior boys, so damaging to my own dignity as Librarian. Nervously I approached Mr. Lias's



C. R. LIAS, FIRST HEADMASTER OF VICTORIA COLLEGE, ALEXANDRIA

study. The door was open, and I could see him sitting with Mrs. Lias on a couch, apparently looking over a book together and (was it possible ?) chuckling silently ! " Come in," said Mr. Lias, looking up. His face was serious but not angry, and it seemed to me that the seriousness only just managed to conceal a smile. " Look at this picture," he continued, pointing to the book. It was a book by Thackeray, and the picture was of two boys playing the fool and smashing up the furniture in a prefect's study at a public school, while through a half-open door in the corner the Headmaster could be seen ushering in the visiting father with the remark : " Your sons, sir, are a credit to the school. They are so diligent, so well-behaved. Let us enter and find the gentlemen at their studies." I looked up and the smile in my face met a twinkle in Mr. Lias's eyes. " You may borrow the book," he said, " to show it to the other gentlemen."

Outside the school the Egyptian national movement went on, and anti-British feeling ran very high. Protest strikes and demonstrations by the students of the Government schools were very common, but nothing of the sort happened at Victoria College, not one Egyptian pupil absented himself, and though some of the Egyptian boys became anti-British in the general political sense, that feeling did not affect their attitude to the school or its English masters as individuals. In this testing time the school reaped the reward of its own wise and healthy attitude to political and national questions in the past. Since its foundation the school had scrupulously avoided anything savouring of British political or national propaganda. It had honestly tried to be a purely educational institution. If it won over many of its pupils to love or admiration for England, this was a by-product, the result of the human contact between masters and pupils and of the sympathetic communication to Oriental boys of the spiritual values of English literature, English history and English institutions.

Zaghlul Pasha and his companions had been released from their captivity in Malta and had gone to Paris, while the British Government on its side had sent Lord Milner to Egypt at the head of a mission to investigate and report on the situation. The Egyptians had adopted towards him and his mission, even before they arrived, a policy of rigorous boycott, on the grounds that Zaghlul Pasha, the nation's accredited representative, was the only person with whom the British Government should deal. Wherever Lord Milner went, he received the same answer : " Go to Zaghlul." It is told that even on asking a certain peasant about his cotton crop and the yield of the season, the baffled statesman was referred by the uncompromising patriot to his accredited plenipotentiary in Paris.

One day we were told that Lord Milner and his colleagues were coming to visit the school. The event was of particular importance for the school. The gallant Headmaster, who for years had been trying to

obtain an endowment for the hitherto self-supporting school, had with the assistance of a group of Old Boys succeeded in interesting Lord Milner in the project, and the great man's interest at that moment was likely to be of particular value, in view of his position as a Trustee of the Cecil Rhodes Scholarship Fund, the pre-war German share of which was being redistributed. The school had therefore to make an impressive display of its talents. Among its latest achievements in literary art was a *Tragedy in Three Acts*, written by me and an Egyptian boy called Sharara in collaboration. The subject was the Scottish rebellion against Edward I; the hero William Wallace, and the villain, of course, the English King. There were several torture scenes especially introduced to afford scope for the peculiar talents of Sharara who, as an assiduous reader of Scott, was a great authority on the subject of mediaeval dungeon procedure. To our intense gratification, Mr. Lias decreed that *Wallace and Bruce* (Bruce as hero No. 2 sharing in the title) should be presented to Lord Milner together with its joint authors.

Sharara was a Dayboy, as also was the Headboy (another Egyptian). For some reason they were both late in arriving on the morning of Lord Milner's visit. The Headmaster was worried lest they should have drawn into the general boycott. He called me into his study and asked me if I thought there was any likelihood of their not coming at all, if I had heard anything. I had not; but I began to be anxious myself, fearing that if they did not come, the presentation to Lord Milner would be abandoned owing to the absence of the other author. But both the Headmaster's fears and mine were soon allayed. Sharara and the Headboy arrived in time. The authors of the *Tragedy in Three Acts* were called up, with their opus, and presented; and then came a little speech from Mr. Lias, revealing to our innocent artists' minds a significance that had never occurred to us before. "This play, My Lord," said the Headmaster, "is a purely literary work. The subject has no reference at all to politics." Sharara and I exchanged startled looks: Wallace versus Edward I; Zaghlul versus George V. I still wonder if the astute statesman suspected our unconscious choice of that remote historical subject of having a sinister bearing on the object of his visit to Egypt. I think the speech was the result of a sudden inspiration on Mr. Lias's part. As the *Tragedy in Three Acts* was being handed to His Lordship, the title must have struck up in Mr. Lias's mind the instantaneous fear that Milner would see the ubiquitous Zaghlul behind William Wallace. His Lordship, however, must have been satisfied as to our bona fides, for a few days later Sharara and I had letters from his secretary, telling us that the great man had not had time yet to read our play, but that he was very much looking forward to doing so; and expressing, from himself, a certain envy for the dramatic opportunities which were being given us in our education, and which had been entirely lacking in his.

My next contact with the Egyptian national movement was some time later in Cairo on the day that Zaghlul Pasha returned from exile. I was staying with a school friend during the Easter holidays. Early in the morning we heard a scuffle and a clamour in the street below. Looking out of the window we saw a policeman grabbing by the neck a thief who had broken into a coffee-house. A police sergeant was advancing with stately steps towards the scene of the crime. The thief who had been entreating the constable to let him go now appealed to the sergeant. " Have mercy, please, let me go! I'll never do it again. I implore you in the name of God, in the name of the Prophet! " The heart of the Law remained adamant. " Shut up you scallywag," shouted the sergeant, while the constable went on dragging the wretch by the neck. Then suddenly the thief shouted in an inspired voice: " I invoke the name of Zaghlul! For Saad's sake let me go! " The sergeant and the constable stopped. " Let him go," said the sergeant. The constable released his victim giving him a friendly smack on the back—and a villainous-looking streak disappeared down the street, shouting " Long live Zaghlul! Long live the Motherland! "

Zaghlul Pasha arrived in the afternoon. From two o'clock the streets of Cairo, and especially the route he was to follow from the station to his house, looked like so many seething rivers at the maximum of their flood. Nothing could be seen in the more congested parts but human heads closely packed from wall to wall. It was estimated that a million people from the provinces assembled in Cairo that day, besides the one million inhabitants of the city. Of this total not less than a million were out in the streets and public squares, on the walls and battlements, towers and windows and chimney-tops, waiting with turbulent excitement, rather than patient expectation, to see the popular idol. All along the street little organized groups kept up regular volleys of cheering, each having its own special slogan—" Long live Saad . . . Long live the beloved leader . . . No protection No Mandate . . . We live free in our country . . . Egypt and the Sudan for us . . . Egypt for the Egyptians . . . Long live Saad . . . long live the beloved leader."

And then, long before his car appeared, the muffled rumbling of the distant storm of cheers came down the street, swelling, gathering strength as it advanced, following the progress of his car. You could see his car, mentally, coming with the storm, moving very slowly. Slowly the storm rolled and rumbled, increasing in volume every second, until it burst into a frenzied crescendo that filled earth and sky, and amidst a delirium of excitement, the like of which I have never seen before or since, the idol passed slowly along, standing in his car, so that he appeared head and shoulders above the crowd, saluting in dignified acknowledgment of the ovation he was receiving.

I was left completely cold by this spectacle, wondering what Zaghlul Pasha had done to be made such a hero.

At the end of my second year at school, I took the School Certificate, and my parents agreed to my remaining a third year for the Higher. After that I was to stay at home in Beyrouth and read law for the French Licence. But Victoria College was the road to Oxford, the School and the Higher Certificates the passport to that kingdom, and Mr. Reed the guide who had conducted so many pilgrims along that great highway. He was a real son of Oxford, one who had lived his Oxford days deeply and fully, and loved to talk about them to his pupils. This was one of his favourite subjects when talking to us. It almost always came into the conversation, introduced by an abrupt " When I was at Oxford . . ." and he would be off in a second, telling us various little anecdotes, describing college life with all its fascinating delights—telling us about lectures and tutorials, clubs and societies, Sir Walter Raleigh and Professor Ernest Barker, the town and the old College buildings, and the lovely country around Oxford.

I had heard of Oxford for the first time when I was seven or eight years old. We were having some people to tea at Omdurman, and my father brought a tinned cake from the grocer's called " Oxford Cake." I asked what Oxford meant and was told that it was a great school, the greatest school in the world. My mother was also in the habit of using the name proverbially to denote a high education. She would often say " the poor fellow wasn't educated at Oxford," talking of somebody who had shown provincial manners or ignorance but could not be expected to know better.

From an early age, therefore, the name of Oxford became for me a symbol of culture and refinement. When I first heard of Victoria College I was thrilled to know that its leaving certificate came from Oxford and Cambridge and that with this certificate one could go to Oxford. At that time of course I could not dream of going there. It was difficult enough to get my mother to consent to my going away to a boarding-school in Egypt, and it seemed impossible that she would ever allow me to go to a university abroad. Besides, I knew that one had to be the son of rich parents to be able to go to Oxford, and that I was not. But the mere fact that I could theoretically gain admission to Oxford with the leaving certificate awarded at Victoria College was very flattering to me.

Mr. Reed's talks about Oxford kindled my imagination. I began to dream of Oxford and long intensely to go there—to go and live three years of that wonderful life which was not to be found anywhere else in the world. Towers and steeples began to haunt my imagination, old bells chiming sweet melodies, cool waters and green hills, the midnight glow of friendly fires, the dignity of learning and the charm of intellectual fellowship. One could see the sea from the school, and

ships silhouetted against the light of the setting sun, going to Europe. Beyond that sea and across France and the English Channel was Oxford . . . Often would I sit on Mr. Reed's balcony, gazing beyond that horizon, like Jude the Obscure walking up to the top of the hill to see the distant lights of Christminster. Would I ever go there? Would my mother consent to my going so far from her? Would my father be able to afford it financially? These questions began to torment me as my third year at Victoria College drew to an end, and most of my friends made their plans for going to England. From Amin Osman and the others who had gone before we received glowing accounts of England and Oxford, and these quickened my already persistent longings.

Both Mr. Reed and Mr. Lias had opened the subject to me more than once, and they knew how eager I was to go to Oxford or Cambridge. They also knew that there were domestic difficulties in the way, and they had promised that when the time came they would write to my father and urge him to let me go. When therefore my last year at school was approaching its end two eloquent letters were sent to my father setting out at persuasive length my aptitudes for learning and the inestimable advantages I would derive from an Oxford or Cambridge education. Mr. Reed held forth hopes of my gaining a scholarship if I arrived in England in time to sit for one.

Mr. Lias pointed out that apart from its intrinsic benefits, an Oxford or Cambridge education would give me a great moral and social advantage in any relations I might have with Englishmen or with British administrations in the Near East. "With an Oxford or Cambridge education," he said, "you will be able to stand on a footing of equality with Englishmen in any part of the world, and you may have a lot to do with Englishmen in your life." It was an argument that appealed to me strongly. I knew that, like my father and uncles and a good many of our friends, I might work in British administrations in the Near East and, as Mr. Lias said, have a lot to do with Englishmen in my life, and I was very anxious that I should not be in an inferior position in my relations with them.

In an agony of suspense I waited for the reply from my parents, and when at last it came my hopes were dashed to the ground. To the Headmaster and Mr. Reed my father replied that much as he might have liked to act on their advice, he could not financially afford to send me to England. To me, while putting this forward as the main and insurmountable obstacle, he argued that if, as was contemplated, I was to live and practise as a barrister in Egypt, an Oxford education far from doing me good would unfit me for my work; that it would be better for me to stay in Egypt or Syria and improve my Arabic, which had never been very good and which if I went to England for three years would be bound to deteriorate. At the same time I received a

number of letters from my aunt, my uncle and intimate family friends telling me that my father was ill and that my wanting to go to Oxford had caused him much worry which was very bad for him, and asking me if I cared for his health, not to press the matter any further. From my mother I received a pathetic appeal. She entreated me to give up the idea without breaking my heart over it since my father just could not afford to send me—but I knew that even if my father were a millionaire my mother would not want me to go because she could not bear to have me so far from her. She had a feeling that if I went to England I should drift away from her and that she would lose me.

I surrendered. I remember I was in the sick-room when I received all these letters. I read them one after the other, my heart sinking lower and lower as I came to the end of each, until it could sink no further. A huge cloud arose and blotted out the towers and steeples in my mind. A heap of ashes smothered away the midnight glow of friendly fires. The dignity of learning and the charm of intellectual fellowship disappeared below the distant horizon—not for me these joys.

There was no choice for me but to accept the position. My father's inability to give me three or four hundred pounds a year for three years was the kind of argument to which there is no answer. As soon as I was well again I wrote home assuring my parents that I would accept the inevitable and make the best of things.

When I went up to say good-bye to Mr. Lias at the end of my last term, he asked me what I was going to do the following year, and when I told him that I was going to stay at home and read law by myself, he invited me to come back to the school as a guest and take charge of the library. I leapt at this invitation. Of course I would accept it if my parents did not object. A new flame of hope flickered in my heart. If I came back to the school I should be still on the road that led to Oxford, and that was sweet and comforting even though I could see no prospect of being able to tread it for the present.

My parents did not object, though my mother was disappointed that I was not going to stay at home. She feared too, I suspect, that as long as I was at Victoria College I should be in dangerous proximity to Oxford and might find some way of circumventing the financial obstacle. But she gave her consent all the same, and full of joy I returned to the school at the end of the summer holidays.

My vague hopes and my mother's fears had not been groundless. Again there was talk of Oxford—secret talk this time and dark plottings. Mr. Reed had not abandoned the struggle. He had set his heart on my going there, and he ceased not to think, with infinite resource and ingenuity, of ways and means. Various schemes were considered and rejected as impracticable. One of them was that I should prevail on my parents to let me go to England for a holiday; that once there

I should try for a scholarship, and if successful—why then I would have forced their hands. One evening he called me into his study and offered to lend me privately £50 a year for three years if I thought my father could afford the rest. "You know I am not a rich man, Edward," he said, "but I can manage to lend you this much, and you must not worry as to how or when you can pay it back." It was a very generous and moving offer to me who knew how slender his resources were, but I did not think that £50 would be enough to enable my father to pay the rest. After this climax there was no more talk of Oxford for several months, during which I completely lost hope. Apart from reading law books I decided to sit for the Higher Certificate again in different subjects from those I had taken the year before.

The year was over. We were half-way through the examinations. It was a Saturday morning and we were doing the history special period paper. Mr. Reed was distributing the papers, and as he gave me mine he said to me in an undertone: "I have good news for you; come to my study at six." The next moment he was out of the room.

I do not know how many marks I lost through the excitement into which this thrilling communication plunged me. It was several minutes before I glanced at the paper before me, and even then it was but a divided attention that I bestowed on it. Good news for me . . . What could that mean? What, but one thing and no other . . . Surely . . . It must be that! Towers and steeples, cool waters and green hills looked at me from between the lines I was trying to read. Good news at six. It was then only nine in the morning.

I spent the day in great excitement and conjecture. I confided the news to my friends and asked them what they thought it could mean . . . Surely nothing else, but how had he done it? What new ingenious scheme had he evolved, and how did he know it would work? How could he with smiling confidence announce it definitely as "good news." The day dragged on. If it were anything else I should be furious with him. What business had he to arouse my hopes like that. He knew very well what "good news" would mean to me.

At six I went to see him. He smiled as I entered his study. "Perhaps you have guessed," he said. "It is about Oxford: I have got you a scholarship of one hundred and fifty pounds a year for three years. Do you think your father can manage the rest now?"

This was tremendous. When I had recovered my breath I said I thought he could. But Mr. Reed wanted a fairly definite answer in a day or two, as he was leaving for England within a week and wanted to enter me at one of the colleges as soon as he arrived. It was already late enough to apply for admission that year, but with Amin Osman's influence at Brasenose College and a letter of recommendation from Lord Allenby, the High Commissioner for Egypt and a friend of the

school, he thought he could just manage to get me in. What was I to do? Send a telegram home and ask for an immediate answer—abide by the reply to a mere telegraphic enquiry? Clearly the stake was too big to be submitted to such a mode of settlement. I must be there myself to present the case in person, to urge and argue in case the first answer was "No." I hit upon a solution. My uncle Samuel [1] was at that time in Cairo on leave. He had great influence over my parents, and I knew he could more or less answer in their name. I suggested that I should go and see him at once. Mr. Reed agreed, but it was then Saturday evening and I had another examination paper to do on Monday morning. I had therefore to go by the night train that left Alexandria at eleven and return the following afternoon. I travelled all the night, without sleeping a second. I smoked cigarettes, dreamt dreams and saw visions. There was with me in the compartment a young political enthusiast, who kept talking to me about the Egyptian nationalist movement and the telling part he had played in it. I did not listen much to what he said. I was at that moment supremely out of touch and sympathy with the East and its national problems—riots and demonstrations, sordid happenings. I was going to England, leaving all that behind me. I did not belong to it.

I arrived in Cairo at five in the morning and went straight to the Continental Hotel where my uncle was staying. The servants were still washing the stairs. I quelled the protesting Hall Porter with "Urgent business" and rushed upstairs, having obtained the number of the room. Before my uncle had fully awakened and recovered from the shock of my abrupt appearance I was telling him all about the object of my journey. His answer was "Yes." My parents, he thought, could no longer object; my father could afford the rest and my mother, though of course she would not like it at first, would not stand in my way. With this answer, and carried on a whirlwind of happiness, I went back to the school and finished my examinations, after which Mr. Reed left for England and I for Syria to obtain my parents' final approval.

I approached my father first, knowing that since he had mainly objected on financial grounds his opposition would be considerably weakened by the offer of the scholarship. In the event, it was completely overcome. His paternal pride flattered by my success; he readily gave his consent and it now remained to obtain my mother's approval. This was a more formidable task, as her opposition was entirely emotional.

One afternoon as we were sitting out on the terrace outside our house, she said to me: "Why do you always look sad. Is it because of Oxford? You should be reasonable. You know we are not rich

[1] My mother's brother who had come to the Sudan with my father soon after the battle of Omdurman.

people. We just cannot afford it." I saw my opportunity and said eagerly: "Is that the only difficulty in the way? I mean, suppose that difficulty was overcome would you let me go?" She was taken aback. "What do you mean?" she asked. "I mean," I blurted out, "that I have got a scholarship, and that if money is the only difficulty, I can go."

My poor mother was shattered. She realized that her only solid defence had gone. As long as the financial obstacle stood in the way she had felt safe. Now that that obstacle had been removed she immediately realized that she could not prevent me from going just because she did not like me to be far from her. It was a terrible blow. She broke down completely and cried for the rest of the evening.

By the next morning, however, her good sense had asserted itself and she gave her consent. I cabled the news to Mr. Reed in England, and the next day I received a cable from him saying that I had been accepted at Brasenose College.

CHAPTER XIX

MECCA

A FEW weeks later I left Port Said for Marseilles. When I had gone on board with Cook's booklet of tickets in my pocket, and my luggage was all put away in the cabin, and it seemed according to all appearances that I was really going to England, I was almost moved to apply the time-honoured test of reality to make sure that I was not dreaming, so much like wish-fulfilment did it all seem.

There were a number of Indian students on board, like me, going to English Universities. Two of them were going to Oxford. We met on the deck after breakfast, and got acquainted with one another. They asked me what my nationality was, and my religion, and I told them that I was a Syrian Christian. They enquired about the French régime in Syria. I attacked it, suggesting a contrast between French and English rule in the manner of one who would say, " You, of course, who are fortunate enough to be governed by the English, have nothing to complain of." But they had much to complain of, and I was both surprised and disappointed in them. I had expected to find them pro-British. Like me, they had read Burke and Shakespeare. Their speech was my speech. They had adopted the thought of England. Their appreciations and values were those of British culture, but instead of loving England like me they seemed bitterly hostile to her. I argued in favour of British imperialism, and they were obviously as disappointed in me as I was in them. We drifted apart, and did not seek each other's company again during the remainder of the journey. There was a wide gulf between us. I was going to England to consummate a process of affiliation begun in my earliest days. They were going to England to acquire the intellectual and technical means whereby they could best combat British dominion in India.

Marseilles at last. Paris. Calais . . . The English Channel; a bitterly cold wind and menacing clouds. A dense mist on the horizon, and through this mist, emerging gradually in dim outline, a bleak white cliff—England! Mecca! After long years of waiting and yearning and dreaming the pilgrim had arrived at the shrine of his gods.

It had been arranged that Malek Hanna, another old school-friend who was then in England, should meet me at Victoria Station, but through an unfortunate accident I was unable to inform him of my arrival in time. When I arrived, therefore, there was nobody to meet me, and I did not know where to go. I felt infinitely small and lonely as I alighted from the train into that ocean of hats and taxis and buses

which is the newcomer's first glimpse of London. People hurrying everywhere; taxis hurrying everywhere; buses hurrying everywhere; everybody knowing where he was going, except me! Where was I going? The only hotel I had heard of was the Hotel Cecil. I knew that it was very expensive, far beyond my means, but I comforted myself with the thought that one night anyhow, would not ruin me, and decided to go there. The fact that I had heard of it somehow made it seem quite friendly. To it, therefore, with something approaching confidence, I went. But alas, it was the first dance of the season, every room was booked and the large and spacious Hotel Cecil could not cope with the unexpected problem of accommodating me. Not one empty room. The reception clerk was very sorry. Not one . . . well, yes, there was a bathroom on the top floor that could be converted into a bedroom provisionally, if I cared to have it. I did care to have it. There was nothing in the whole world that I more cared to have at that moment than that bathroom.

When I opened my eyes the next day, and looked at London out of the window, I saw two or three sooty-looking walls facing my window in various directions, a smoky mist hovering over them and a light drizzle falling through the mist. I had made up my mind to go to Oxford that afternoon. There was only one thing I wanted to do before leaving London, and that was to visit Westminster Abbey. It was not the sightseer's desire to see one of London's greatest monuments; it was not the amateur architect's interest in a beautiful building. It was, rather, the pilgrim's pious desire to pay his devotions to the remains of the honoured saints of his religion. Westminster Abbey was for me the burial place of England's great poets and statesmen, the wise and heroic men whom I had learned to love and admire at school.

I spent the whole morning in the Abbey, filled with the deepest feelings of awe and reverence—not for the God to whose worship it was dedicated, but for the mortals whose bones lay buried in it, and whose likenesses in marble crowded the floor and the walls. Is not this Chatham here, and that Disraeli? and yonder alone in that high niche, William Pitt, solitary in marble as he was in life? . . . Here is Poets' Corner. Johnson sleeping beside Garrick; Tennyson beside Macaulay. On top a slab of marble bearing the name; and below, the sacred dust. Slowly I walked round, looking at every statue, reading every inscription, recognizing old friends, and all the time moved by an ecstatic feeling. It was as if these friends of the past had come to life; their spirit seemed to fill the place, and for a few hours I ceased to belong to the 20th century.

I arrived at Oxford in the evening, so that I could not see the towers and steeples from the train as I had imagined I would. After my financial adventure at the Hotel Cecil I decided to reform and retrench

at Oxford ; so I walked up to a policeman outside the station and asked him to direct me to the cheapest hotel in the town. He pointed with his finger across the street and said " There it is." I looked and saw a huge sign-board announcing " Station & Commercial," and to it, without any further enquiries, I went. But it seemed that no hotel in the United Kingdom could, without taking extraordinary measures, cope with me at first sight. Perhaps it was the first night of the commercial-travelling season. The authorities did not explain, but sent me round to a neighbouring house to be put up for the night. In this house there was no electric light ; a gas lamp burned dimly in the passage. An elderly gentleman carrying a candle led the way upstairs and showed me into a minute bedroom that looked scarcely bigger than the bath in my apartment of the previous night. On the wall there were several biblical texts. It was decidedly a depressing environment. I went to sleep wondering how there were still houses in England where there was no electric light.

The next morning, as soon as I had finished breakfast, I went into the town. Oxford at last, Universitas Oxoniensis. The towers and steeples began to appear, the grey walls clothed in the dignity of centuries, the massive gates. From policemen and pedestrians I asked the names of this college and that, and every answer meant something to me. Pembroke . . . here Johnson quoted Macrobius at his first dinner in Hall, and threw a pair of boots out of the window. . . . Magdalen : there Addison used to walk between the elms and look at the deer. University . . . through this gate was Shelley expelled for having written a pamphlet against Christianity ; and under that dome a statue has been erected to him for having been a great poet. Every college was associated in my mind with the name of a great writer or statesman. Yesterday I had visited the graves of England's illustrious sons, to-day I was roaming amidst the scenes of their youth and academic life. The Oxford that I saw on that first day was not the modern Oxford that is peopled by living creatures in plus-fours, but the Oxford of the past with its invisible inmates of the spirit world.

At the Commercial Hotel I had my first experience of living in contact with English people in England. I had often heard Syrians who had been to England drawing a vast distinction between the English people at home and abroad. " If you want to know the English people as they are by nature, go to their country. There they are genial, hospitable, kind to foreigners. It is only when they come out here as rulers that they become intolerable." The notion that in his dealings with Easterners the Englishman puts on an attitude of haughtiness and cold reserve which is alien to him in his own country was widely held by those who admired the British, who had English sympathies but found it difficult to defend the attitude of the Englishman to the Easterner abroad, and more difficult still to sustain their

affection for the British in face of the damping aloofness of the latter. Their chief retort, in their pathetic endeavour to retain faith in their ideal, was that the real Englishman could only be found in his own country; and that in the East, whether he liked it or not, he had to wear a mask, to keep himself remote, to discourage familiarity. This was supposed to be dictated by considerations of policy, which whether right or wrong did not leave the individual free. Many an Englishman, it was argued, had been charmingly unreserved on his arrival, and had continued to be so until he had received secret instructions from his superiors, told not to be too affable with the "natives," when he suddenly seemed to become a different person, stiff, unapproachable. I had often heard a story illustrating this point, which I give here without vouching for its authenticity. Indeed it is almost too pointed to sound true; but whether true or not, it throws light on the current notion in Egpyt at that time of the Englishman's attitude towards Easterners. Once upon a time, the story went, the son of a rich Egyptian Pasha went to Oxford, and during the three years he spent there made friends with several English undergraduates to whom he was lavishly generous, being far richer than they were. Out of the fulness of his Oriental heart (and pocket) he treated them to drinks, meals, theatres, time after time, and they gladly accepted his hospitality. They became very intimate, and when he returned to Egypt on completing his time at the university he expressed the hope that he might see them there one day. . . . The months passed. One day he learned that one of them had come to Egypt as a Government official. Full of joy, he at once went to see him. But a cruel deception awaited him. He was met with cold official reserve. He was called "Mr." He was asked if anything could be done for him. The Admiral Crichton and the Peer's daughter were now back in England, and what had been possible on the desert Island could not continue.

CHAPTER XX

AN OXFORD UNDERGRADUATE

I HAD been instructed to report to the Senior Tutor at Brasenose College on a given day some time before the beginning of term. Deeply awed by the dramatic import of the occasion, I made my way to B.N.C. and crossed the portals of the College that was to be my spiritual home for the next three years. Timidly I announced myself to the porter, who said that Mr. Wakeling, the Senior Tutor, was expecting me. He guided me through the quads to Mr. Wakeling's room. The Senior Tutor, sitting in the middle of his library, addressed me somewhat pompously but not unkindly. He said that he had heard about me from Mr. Reed, and that subject to my passing a College entrance examination, which consisted of an English essay and a French translation, B.N.C. would take me to its academic bosom. " In the event of your failing to pass this test," he continued, " I presume you have your plans." The test did not sound terrifying, but I did not like the suggestion about the necessity of having alternative plans. What plans I could have against that unthinkable eventuality save an ignominious return home was not at all clear.

I had not heard before about this College entrance examination; I had thought that the exemption I had obtained with the School and Higher Certificates covered all the entrance barricades with which Oxford surrounded itself, but now I learned that that exemption was only a University affair, and that each College, with the characteristic jealousy of English autonomy, insisted on regarding the federal exemption as inadequate, and on formally asserting its independence by means of a little test of its own. That evening I had a letter from Mr. Reed, telling me that he had not informed me before I left Syria of this last fence, for fear lest it might introduce an element of doubt into the minds of my parents, and so endanger the whole scheme of my proceeding to England. He assured me that it was a simple matter of form, and proceeded to give me some anxious and excellent advice about the viva voce through which I had also to pass after the written test. " Let me remind you," he said, " that the object of oral examinations at Oxford is not so much to find out how much a man knows as what sort of a fellow he is." I understood the solicitous hint; Mr. Reed was warning me not to show off to the assembled Dons.

When I went to the College for the examination I found two other candidates, both English boys, doing the examination with me. The Senior Tutor distributed the papers and disappeared. My companions had one look at the French translation and simultaneously turned to

me: "Do you know French?" I confessed to a fair knowledge of that language, which I placed generously at their disposal. I wrote a moderately good essay, and felt practically certain of success. The viva voce was in the evening. I spent the afternoon wandering about, and at six o'clock was ushered into the black presence of the assembled arbiters of my destiny. They were sitting on either side of a large table, one end of which was reserved for the victim. They asked me what I had done at school, and what I proposed to do at Oxford. The Senior Tutor asked me about my object in life (a subject to which he returned several times during the next three years). I answered modestly. I was humility itself. I was thanked and told that I could go. "If you come back in an hour's time," said the Principal, an acute stutterer, "we shall be able to let you know our decision." I spent the hour walking up and down the High, between Magdalen Bridge and Carfax. When the hour was over I knocked again at the Principal's door. I was, against all rational evidence, extremely nervous. The Principal held out his hand, and then followed an excruciatingly tantalizing moment: "Well, Mr. A . . . A . . . Atiyah," he said, "wwwwwwwww we aaaaaaa . . . ccccc . . . cept you wwwwwww . . . without any h . . . h . . . hhhhhesitation."

Another dream had come true. The plottings had succeeded; Mr. Reed had won his battle; I was an undergraduate of Oxford. In an exultation of fulfilment long delayed I walked about the college, looking proprietorially at the grey walls, at the grey October sky. The grey sky was the sky of England; the grey walls the walls of an Oxford College, and I was there, among these walls and under that sky, for at least three years, to take my share in the cultural heritage of the West.

As soon as I had been accepted, the Principal began to take an interest in me. He asked where I was living till the beginning of term, and when I, quite unconscious yet of the social status of an Oxford undergraduate, told him that I was staying at the "Station and Commercial," he visibly winced. He had never heard of it, he said, and it was his custom to recommend the Guest House to new undergraduates. As, however, term would be starting in another three days it was not perhaps worth my while to move. Then there was the problem of "digs." He referred me to some rooms which he knew were available. They were a very depressing habitation in a very gloomy house in the most soul-destroying street in Oxford. The atmosphere of my sitting-room was that of a mediaeval dungeon furnished by a loyal lower middle-class subject of Queen Victoria; while my bedroom was an irregular area of chilly desolation with a chilly, desolate-looking bed at one end, and a chilly and very desolate-looking washstand at the other. The ceiling nearly touched the bed, and the floor radiated in descending obliquity from the centre. But the

rent was reasonably low, and I had no choice. That my affection for England and Oxford survived two terms of those rooms is the greatest proof I can offer of its indestructibility.

Then term began. There was a rush of taxis in the High, and the Lodge was crowded with trunks and young men in plus-fours. The shades of Shelley and Dr. Johnson were rudely dissipated, and with a jerk I found myself in living, 20th century Oxford. You could tell the Freshers by their timidity and isolation. The seniors stood and talked in groups. In addition to my natural timidity as a Fresher and as a foreigner, I was conscious of yet another, and deeper, feeling of inferiority on account of my short stature. These undergraduates were mostly giants. I had never before been thrown into such a massed company of six-footers. I felt like a hack among race-horses. There was, of course, the great Amin Osman, in his third year, Secretary of the Soccer Club, and a very popular figure at B.N.C. He, too, was short, about my own height, and had achieved eminence in spite of that handicap. There were also a few short English boys, but the general impression was of height, robust, athletic height.

In the evening the bells chimed, and the College congregated in Chapel, and then strolled across the quad into Hall. The Freshers were shy and talked little, apart from occasional requests for the cruet. Next to me sat a very shy, pink-faced but good-looking boy with intelligent but timid blue eyes, who wore a scholar's gown. We passed each other the cruet several times and, through the good offices of this passive intermediary, started a tentative conversation. When dinner was over, he asked me to have coffee with him in his room. His name was Michael de Selincourt, and he was the son of Ernest de Selincourt, the well-known critic and Professor of Poetry. I gave him a brief sketch of my life, and we drank coffee and talked round the fire. I looked around me consciously savouring the fulfilment of my dream. Yes, this was Oxford life: the charm of intellectual companionship (could I have had a more intellectual companion than the son of a Professor of English literature!); the midnight glow of friendly fires! The dignity of learning was to follow the next morning, when I attended my first lecture, and sat at the feet of a historian whose books I had read for the Higher Certificate the year before. Here was not the cold printed word, but the living voice of the man himself, the Oracle in person. How often had I seen on the front page of impressive tomes the majestic formula: "By ——, M.A., Fellow of ——, Oxford" so remote and mysterious then. Now I was privileged to meet those great invisibles of the printed word face to face and pick up their words of wisdom with my ears. The lecturer on that first day happened to be my tutor. When the lecture was over he waited for me in the passage, and asked me if I had been able to follow comfortably (I had), if he had been slow enough for me (he had).

Next came Union Night, the first debate of the term. Oxford was not letting me down; here again my fervent anticipations were more than fulfilled as I took my seat for the first time in that august Parliament of Youth from which so many of England's rulers in the past had come, and in which at that very moment, on the benches around me, and more particularly on the Presidential dais, there sat who knew how many potential Prime Ministers. My eyes, half in pride and half in reverence, travelled round the benches crowded with members, round the walls equally crowded with the portraits of majestic ex-Presidents, round the gallery crowded with visitors, visitors who could neither vote nor cheer, nor ask questions but only, if they behaved themselves, listen. On my left was that distinguished marble trinity: Salisbury, Gladstone, Asquith; in front, the Secretary's table, with the despatch-boxes on it, one slightly higher than the other and on each a glass of water for exhausted eloquence; and behind it, the triple throne of the President, the Junior Librarian, and the Junior Treasurer—empty as yet, for those Olympians would only come in at 8.15, or more precisely 8.13, when the audience was complete. The occasion was a distinguished one, for a distinguished visitor and noble lord from London, Viscount Cecil, was coming to address the House on the League of Nations. . . . Suddenly, at 8.13, there was a hush, and all eyes turned towards the door as the officers in full evening dress and accompanied by the noble lord filed in, singly, and with measured stately step swerved round the corner and walked up the length of the floor to their exalted seats amidst the accustomed clap.

I was at that time an opponent of the League of Nations, regarding it as an innovation of which Burke would have disapproved, for was it not theoretical and rational, as opposed to practical and expedient? And had it not been devised by that dangerous agency, the mind of man, instead of spontaneously evolving from the safe and salutary past? I did not therefore feel sympathetic towards Lord Cecil's arguments, but I followed the debate with the profoundest rapture to its bitter, tapering, lingering end at 11.30, when only a few heroic spirits determined to conquer fame (apart from the officers and the noble lord who had already conquered it) remained on the benches desperately competing for the President's elusive eye, and watching with sinking hearts the ruthless passage of the last few precious moments on the clock. I myself did not attempt to conquer fame on that first night. I was too preoccupied with the occasion as a spectacle to be enjoyed in every detail, to regard it as an opportunity for self-display. And I was shy. It was all so new, so dramatic—the crowded galleries, the distinguished visitor, "Mr. President, sir," the figures in evening dress pivoting eloquently round the despatch-boxes, where Asquith and Gladstone had pivoted once, the little cards put up discreetly by the Secretary against the glasses of water to remind the pivoting figures

that the time allotted for their eloquence was up, the voluminous applause!

The speeches of the undergraduates themselves did not awe me much; some of them were good, but not, I thought, on a level unattainable by me. I discovered later on that the Union's greatest talents had not come into play on that first night. The Society's most gifted orator of that time was an Indian called Bandaranaike. His command of English was miraculous, and the passionate brilliance of his oratory was superb enough to wring from a predominantly conservative audience a tempest of cheering (which did not subside until the President had rung the bell twice) for a speech he made on the subject of Indian freedom and which concluded with an adroit appeal to the "descendants of Boadicea." It was a source both of gratification and hope for me to see an Oriental so highly enthroned at the Union. I hoped to see him rise to the Presidential seat, but he did not. He succeeded in becoming Secretary, but he was overwhelmingly defeated when he stood for the Presidency. Ten years were to elapse before Oxford took the epoch-marking decision to have an Indian President of the Union, and when that decision was eventually taken some English newspapers deplored the decadence of the British race.

There was also Douglas Woodruff, the greatest Union wit of that time, who became President in my second term. Woodruff had just returned from America, where he and other Union champions had been debating against the American universities; and there was some scurrilous and entirely unfounded rumour in the American Press about his having exchanged his non-existent wife for a mythical Ford car. I decided to make my début on this promising controversy, and having competed successfully for the President's eye, was given the floor reasonably soon after the paper speakers, at the first debate of my second term. My shrewd remarks on the respective merits of wives and Ford cars elicited a smile from Woodruff, which I noted with great satisfaction. But greater satisfaction followed when I resumed my seat, for I saw the President whispering something in the Junior Librarian's ear; I saw the Junior Librarian scribbling a note; I saw him handing the note down, pointing at me, and finally I saw the note travelling towards me, down the line of members, an object of reverent envy to the other beginners, who were still competing for a nod from the President when I was already receiving written communications from him! It was an invitation to attend the Presidential reception after the debate. I went, and there the Junior Librarian told me that the President wished to know if I would speak the following week on the motion that the Eastern races of the Empire should develop along Eastern, and not Western, lines. I said that I should very much like to speak against the motion. It seemed indeed that the motion had been specially framed for me to oppose. All the influences of my

childhood, all the tendencies of my culture, all my convictions and aspirations were massed together in one formidable array against the Orientalism of the East. Had I not passionately pursued the Western, the English line? It was the line I wanted the whole East to follow. The Junior Librarian regretted that they already had two speakers on that side, whereas they still wanted a second speaker for the other side. A tall Balliol scholar standing next to us said that he would like to fill the vacancy. His name was Robert Levens. I had seen him once or twice with some of my Egyptian friends, and heard much about him. He was one of the classical giants of the time and had wide international interests. He had founded a cosmopolitan club and shared in founding an International Assembly modelled on the League of Nations; and most of his friends were to be found among the Indian and Egyptian students. In the event Levens spoke third on the Paper and I spoke fifth on the other side.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CULTURE OF THE WEST

IT was not from any reactionary motive that Robert Levens wanted the East to develop along Eastern and not Western lines. He was not a Machiavellian imperialist who wished to keep the Eastern races of the Empire down by withholding from them the light of Western culture. On the contrary he was thinking of the welfare of the East, and of that alone, and he believed that it was better for the East not to follow those lines of development which in Europe had led to the catastrophe of 1914. For this was the crux of the matter. The shadow of the War lay heavily on many of the younger English intellectuals I knew at Oxford. The great disillusionment engendered by that event had shaken their faith in the very bases of Western civilization—the industry which fed it, the mechanization which lay behind that industry, the Science on which that mechanization was founded, and the materialist conception of life which born of all this activity dominated and, perhaps, doomed the West. Religion had lost its hold. Socialism was too weak and compromised at the conclusion of the War to offer any firm hope of salvation. The West, it seemed, was hopelessly committed to an industrial civilization which had led to moral disaster and might lead to it again. What right had it then to force this civilization on the countries which by the grace of God were still free from it, least of all on the spiritual East, the home of great religions, the land of inspiration and mysticism?

I found this attitude truly amazing. There was I and many other humble students from the East come to Oxford to sit at the feet of Western teachers, and acquire what we thought was the cream of the culture of the ages. And here were intelligent Englishmen doubting whether they had anything good to teach us, hoping that an unspoilt East might give them a message of salvation. It was impossible for me to share these views. I could not see the East giving the expected message. I had a deep suspicion that the mysticism of the East was an illusion, a romantic interpretation of poverty, indolence and superstition, suggested by remoteness, prompted by the experience of a frustrated civilization. Whatever the defects of Western civilization I was convinced that it was the way of progress; that its basic elements —the humanist tradition, the scientific approach, rational knowledge and the control of nature, machinery as the material basis of a better life—had come into the world to stay and spread, and that no country should or could shut them out. If this civilization had, as I could see and as its sons proclaimed, engendered appalling problems, the solution,

I was convinced, was not to turn back, not to scrap science and industry and machinery, but to go forward and learn better how to use them, just as a child who is trying to ride a bicycle does not, if he has a bad fall, conclude that the bicycle is a dangerous monster and decide to walk for the rest of his life. Because the West had fallen badly from its bicycle, I would not dream of urging the East to stick to the camel. The bicycle was a new and vital thing in the scheme of life, and the East, willy-nilly, had to appropriate and dominate it if it wished to move forward.

The key arch of my whole belief was the conviction that science and machinery as a basis for civilization were of universal applicability, and that it was sheer nonsense to hold that they were suitable for certain parts of the world but not for others. With the advent of Science, it seemed to me, the dawn had broken of a civilization that was bound in its essence to be common to all mankind. Before that dawn, when the world was divided both physically by unbridgeable distances, and mentally by the subjectivity of belief, civilization was necessarily local. But Science had broken down physical barriers and, more important still, forced an inescapable uniformity on the mind of man. It had substituted ascertainable fact for controversial belief, the objective universality of knowledge for the subjective individuality of faith. For over a thousand years human beings had differed about the relative merits of Christianity and Islam as a means to salvation, but over the validity of Newton's laws of motion or the efficacy of the anti-Rabic treatment there was no argument.

Unlike blasé Englishmen, therefore, I was deeply impressed by the manifestations of England's industrial and technological progress, and by the signs of orderliness and organization which I saw everywhere. The discipline of the English people, the tidiness and cleanliness of English towns—these are the features which the Easterner, coming from a supremely unorganized and undisciplined part of the world, appreciates most when he first sees England, just as the Englishman, tired perhaps of too much organization and discipline, finds a charm in the disorderliness of the East, which he calls picturesque. Order and tidiness had such an appeal for me that in the drab and characterless rows of cheap suburban houses I did not see ugliness or monotony, but only a neat and compact arrangement.

But science and machinery and material order were only the physical structure of that civilization which I had grown up to regard with so much affection and reverence. Inside the structure dwelt Shakespeare and Burke and Dr. Johnson, British democracy and justice, individual liberty, the Habeas Corpus, the Humanities and the love of nature—all the moral and aesthetic values that go to make the soul of civilization. I had not found these values in the East, where for more than five hundred years there had been no living literature or history; no

recorded human experience of any universal significance; no delving by man into the heart of man, no enquiry by man into his destiny.

Until I came to England the only form in which I had imbibed Western culture was literature. The other arts had not been revealed to me. I had heard Western music and seen reproductions of pictures by the Old Masters, but they had told me nothing, and my taste in this sphere of art was very poor. In my last year at school when I had a room all to myself, I had felt for the first time the stirrings of an interest in interior decoration. I had never had a room to myself at home, and had never taken any interest in the appearance of my domestic surroundings until I walked into that little room allotted to me at school. Feeling all at once the pride of domestic privacy and independence I immediately set about the task of furnishing and decorating it. I went to the town and bought two pictures to hang on the wall. They were the first pictures I had ever bought, cheap prints, one of a pretty girl's face of the chocolate box and magazine-cover type, and the other of a river and some trees. There was no point or character in either of them, but they pleased me immensely, and looked, I thought, very tasteful on the wall. That had been the zenith of my appreciation of the fine arts before I went to England.

But now music and painting and sculpture were to reach me with all the stirring impact of revelation. They approached me, in the first instance, through the good offices of my friend de Selincourt, and in the titanic forms of Michelangelo and Beethoven. De Selincourt, like all accomplished undergraduates, patronized the arts. He had a few Michelangelo prints on his walls, and a gramophone on which he played the Fifth Symphony. I remember standing before a photograph of the statue of Lorenzo de Medici, and feeling strangely moved. I had never imagined that a block of stone could utter such superb poetry. Something of the infiniteness of Shakespeare's characters seemed to dwell in the chiselled brooding of that face, the shaded brow, the rested chin. I eagerly pursued this introduction. The gods themselves favoured my study, for it suddenly received a series of encouragements from the blue. Michelangelo was set as the subject for the Newdigate prize poem in my second year, and almost immediately after, a rich uncle of mine appeared from America and invited me to spend my Easter vacation with him and his wife in Italy.

This latter episode (in spite of my failure to win the prize) had all the elements of a fairy tale. The rich uncle from America, that classical fairy character, had left Syria for the Western Eldorado when I was still a baby, and had remained there ever since. He had not written home for over fifteen years. Friends vaguely reported him to be alive, but it was certain that he had not made his fortune. Then suddenly, after the War, he made it in linen, bought in Ireland, embroidered in Florence and sold in America. In the flush of success he wrote to all his relatives

in Syria and sent munificent presents. He learned from my father that I was at Oxford, but I had heard nothing of all this until one day I received a telegram from him asking me to meet him at the Hotel Cecil the following evening.

I went and found not only a wealthy uncle from America, but a charming young aunt whom he had just married in Chicago before sailing. I spent the night with them, enjoying at my uncle's expense the luxury which had cost me so dearly on my first day in England. After dinner my uncle produced cigars and told me the story of his life : real American stuff, poverty and hardship at first, years of struggle, moments of despair ; cleaning rugs from door to door, pawning his watch, growing a beard so as to save the expense of shaving and then Success, the great success that comes at last in the land of equal opportunity. Great country, America ! A 200 dollar fur coat for his young wife, a first-class passage on the *Berengaria*, the Hotel Cecil, cigars, combined honeymoon and linen business in Italy. Half-lying on the soft couch in their room with a cigar in his mouth, my uncle looked the epitome of the United States.

Before I left they invited me to join them in Florence for the Easter vacation, and as a parting gift my uncle put his hand into his pocket and handed me ten pounds, saying he would let me have a cheque later for the journey to Florence.

I reckoned from what I had seen of my uncle's munificence that the cheque would be enough to cover a first-class journey, in which case it could provide two third-class tickets if I preferred company to luxury and took a friend with me. I therefore put before my friends the proposition that if one of them cared to come and could support himself in Florence during my stay there, I would take and bring him back at my uncle's expense, third class. The offer was promptly accepted by John Scragg, a Mancunian scholar reading Modern Greats. The Easter vacation came, and with it a cheque for ten pounds from my uncle. My calculations had been correct. Ten pounds would just cover two third fares to Florence, provided we could spend sixteen hours (6 a.m. to 10 p.m.) in Paris without going to a hotel. This we managed to do, taking a nap in the afternoon on the stone seats in the outside walls of the Louvre, having exhausted the possibilities of the inside as well as the power of our legs. We arrived at Florence early in the morning two days later, looking extremely dirty after three nights in third-class compartments. I took Scragg with me to my uncle's hotel, introducing him as a friend who happened to be coming to Florence on his own. For the time being nothing was said about where he was going to stay, but as it was still very early morning it seemed quite natural that he should go up with me to my room for a wash. My room was a sumptuous apartment with a private bathroom. So we filled the bath twice in rapid succession and scrubbed ourselves

clean. When we came down Scragg was invited to breakfast with us. He and my young aunt found a common interest in music, and before breakfast was over there was a general tendency to regard him as an established member of the family. He found a cheap room in the house of a retired Englishman, but had all his meals with us at the hotel. When on the second day, not having received a specific invitation to lunch, he politely stayed away, to make a test case of it, my uncle and aunt said that it must not happen again, and of course it did not.

While my uncle attended to his linen business during the mornings, I and John and my aunt explored the treasure-houses of Florence, the Duomo and Pitti and Uffizi, the Bellearte and Capella Medici; churches and galleries and quaint little shops in mediaeval streets. We came back from these expeditions laden with photographs and coloured prints which we displayed in a miniature gallery-formation round my room. My uncle coming back from his linen, and finding me and John posturing at different angles before rows of pictures on the bed, on the dressing-table, and on the various chairs round the room, thought us crazy.

After the first perfunctory round, two places in particular drew us again and again: the Capella Medici and the Bellearti, where Michelangelo's greatest poems, finished and unfinished, stand or lie about in the mighty repose of marble: the four symbolic statues of Night and Day, Dawn and Evening on the Medici sarcophagi, with Lorenzo brooding over them; the line of unfinished slaves in the Bellearti, and in it one particular figure: a man still half-embedded, struggling with prodigious effort to emerge from the rock, his arms above his head straining to lift the dead weight of the stone, his burdened legs heaving their way up, as from a sucking bog. Only glimpses of his front appear, the rest is still one with the inanimate mass. He will wrest a completed shape yet from undefined matter; he will break away from the deadly grip of the parent rock, and become a free individual, but only with the infinite pain of all birth.

In the afternoon I used to go up to Fiesole, with pencil and paper, and write my Newdigate poem.

Towards the end of our time my uncle asked me about my plans for the future. I had none, and said so; whereupon he offered to employ me, when I left Oxford, as manager of his business in Florence. Of all the things I had ever considered the possibility of doing, business was not one. I had always regarded it as a sordid line, but then business in Florence, with Michelangelo and Raphael in the background, was a different matter. That it was so was evident from the shockingly unbusinesslike versatility of the man who was then my uncle's manager, and whom it was proposed I should succeed. This gentleman, Signor Cacciaputti (also addressed as "Professori," "Maestro" and "Capitano") played the violin with great virtuosity,

was a devastating authority on Renaissance art, and had been a professor of psychology at the University of Lausanne. Driven into the linen industry in his fifties he had added this branch of commercialized art to his other interests, but only in a very subsidiary capacity. During my few visits to his office, the Professori would leave my uncle alone and join me in high debate on the matters of the spirit.

I was therefore attracted by my uncle's offer, and told him that I would think it over for some time and let him know.

When the time came for our return to England a horrible fear assailed us. What if my uncle decided to buy me the tickets (single, first) instead of handing me the cash equivalent? Or again, suppose he gave me the money, but insisted on seeing us off at the station? Our last day arrived, and still there was no money. The situation became tense. John, sure of his return transport, had spent all his money on Florentine *objets d'art*. If my uncle presented me with a Cook's collection of first-class tickets to London, John would just have to stay behind in Florence until funds could be raised in England. I could not bring myself to ask my uncle for a loan on top of all his other kindnesses, particularly as I felt he would guess what the money was wanted for, and that was definitely too much. John and I discussed the question late into the night: I would go back, raise a fiver somehow and send it immediately, while he did his best to live on nothing till the money arrived.

Early in the morning my uncle came into my room and handed me ten pounds in notes. Our major anxiety allayed, it remained to make sure that my uncle did not see us off at the station. We discovered a train that left at 1.35, and as it was a hot day, and that was the lunch-hour as well, we would not hear of anyone seeing us off.

Back at Oxford I explored new avenues of culture. I joined the Pater Society, a literary society founded in memory of Walter Pater, whose presence had graced B.N.C. a few decades earlier. The society, which included most of the College intellectuals, held fortnightly meetings, at which papers were read and discussions held on literary and artistic subjects. The meetings were held rotationally in the members' rooms, each member acting in turn as host and providing refreshments; the atmosphere was friendly, the quality of the papers and discussions good. To become a member you had to attend a meeting, as the guest of one of the members, and then be proposed and elected. To this initial meeting I was taken by Scragg. It was an out-of-the-ordinary occasion, for Charles Morgan, now a famous novelist and then a recently "gone-down" ex-president, was there to read a paper on Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*. I joined in the discussion that followed the paper, and was subsequently elected.

My own contribution, when I had been a member for a few weeks, was a paper on Dr. Johnson.

There was also the International Assembly, a University society modelled on the League of Nations. One of its founders was Robert Levens, and all my Egyptian friends from Victoria College belonged to it as "Delegates." Being the only Syrian at Oxford, I presented myself and was admitted as delegate for Syria. We used to meet once a fortnight in the Union debating hall, with placards on the benches announcing nationalities (of which there were over thirty) and discuss an agenda of international questions. A Commission on which I sat settled the Mosul oil dispute in one sitting. I made two speeches in the course of my career as Syrian Delegate, one defending Turkey against the designs of Mr. Lloyd George, and the other attacking the League of Nations as "a piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense," doomed (I little suspected with what deadly certitude) to failure and extinction.

CHAPTER XXII

A DWELLER IN ENGLAND

I WAS also extremely happy in my private life in England. Not even at the beginning did I in any way feel that I was a stranger, nor was I ever conscious of a racial prejudice against me. On the contrary I encountered kindness and frendliness everywhere. By my friends in College I was treated in every respect as one of them, and my identification with the English people was now complete. In spite of defending Turkey and "representing" Syria at the International Assembly I was not at that time in any real sense a champion of Eastern nationalism. I was not yet even an internationalist. My sympathies formed by Burke and Mr. Reed were still entirely 18th century British. I had many Egyptian and Indian friends, but my group loyalty was on the British side.

My greatest friend was still de Selincourt, an intellectual aristocrat of severe tastes and meticulous refinement in all the walks of life; but I had several others now, and we formed a distinct group, whose headquarters became my room when I moved into College in my second year.

This event was altogether a great occasion in my life. After my two terms in St. John Street, I had moved into a new and cheerful house on Hill Top Road, overlooking green fields and copses in the direction of Cowley village. It was a lovely spot from which to enjoy the English spring and watch the first beginnings of summer in the countryside. But in spite of this welcome change I was very much looking forward to moving into College. As long as you lived in "digs" you did not really belong to College life; you were a visitor and not a denizen. Besides, having your rooms in College meant that you could give expression to your latest tastes in furniture, your most up-to-date theories of art. I was conscious of a great development in me since my first uninstructed effort to decorate my room at Victoria College. Two years had passed since then, and I had met de Selincourt and visited Rome and Florence and bought prints of Michelangelo and Leonardo. I had also been greatly impressed, on a lower plane of art, with the English style of furnishing and interior decoration. In the Near East the clash of civilizations had generally resulted in hybrid mixtures of extreme incongruity. Oriental taste had not picked out the best of what Europe had to offer, nor indeed could it, as long as it was conditioned by traditional Oriental standards. When a Syrian or an Egyptian wanted to buy a European article, he naturally looked for the ingredients of beauty to which his eye was accustomed in traditional

Arab art, with the result that what he chose was generally florid and lifeless. Most of the houses I had seen in Egypt and Syria before I went to England had been ugly or incongruous. In many of them there were beautiful individual items, a magnificent Persian carpet, an exquisite brass-pot, but on a chair above the carpet there would be a gaudy cushion with insipid angels embroidered on its face, or on the wall next to the brass-pot there would be a picture chosen without discrimination—a cheap commercial print of some sentimental subject of the kind favoured by English landladies, or a very indifferent reproduction by the lady of the house or her daughter, of some hackneyed European painting. There were some completely Westernized Syrians who had houses well furnished in the European style. But these were for the most part the sumptuous houses of rich people.

What delighted and impressed me most in England was the great art of turning out an attractive room with the simplest and least expensive material, the magic wand of good taste which out of a few yards of cretonne, a few cubic feet of wood and a certain amount of glass and cotton wool and paint can bring into being a room of solid comfort and simple charm where all things give pleasure and nothing is unnecessary. I realized before I had been long in England that the English had a natural genius for interior decoration and for gardens, a genius which, if restricted in regard to the former to a certain class, was, in regard to the latter, the common heritage of the whole people, and could with a few roses, a lawn the size of a billiard cloth, and a herbaceous border that looks like a Hornby train accessory, produce a miraculous little garden in the most impossible of places.

In order to be financially able to indulge my individual taste I applied for and got the cheapest set of rooms in College, and with what I thus saved in rent I proceeded to redecorate and furnish my sitting-room. I had the walls repapered and the furniture re-covered. I bought an extra chair and lampshades, and I succeeded in wheedling a new rug out of the Bursar. From home I had brought with me a leopard skin which I spread over my book-case, and on that was installed a small bust of Dante imported from Florence. My Michelangelo and Leonardo prints were then suitably arranged round the walls; and in the towering shadow of the Radcliffe Camera I sat for the first time in a room of my creation, and found it good. It was a small room, and when the fire blazed in front of the settee throwing its glow on the near walls, it looked very warm and cosy and friendly, a cheerful sanctum in which to face the English winter.

In spite, or rather on account, of being a son of the South, born and brought up on the shores of the Mediterranean and in the heart of Africa, I loved the English winter. Just as one tires of the blatant light of the day and craves for the relief and mystery of darkness, for

the unfamiliar shapes and soft, blurred shades and edges of the night, so I had tired of the transparent sky and harsh sun of the East. There was no mystery, no promise of surprise in them. Everything on that Eastern earth glared with the same white intensity; every nook stood naked probed to its depth; every outline stabbed you in the eye. The sky was open to infinity, giving God himself no privacy.

As a little boy in Omdurman, sweating under fierce temperatures, I had mapped out for myself a career of polar exploration, to be preferably undertaken during the Arctic night. And ever since that time I had yearned for the Northern latitudes. The conventional Christmas cards, showing the earth possessed by Tennyson's silent snow thrilled me year after year. Captain Scott's end in the frozen South had seemed to me a consummation devoutly to be wished, for how could a man die more happily than in a lonesome ice-hut, shrouded by the polar night and swept by friendly blizzards?

Transported at last by a considerate fate beyond the English Channel, if not the Arctic circle, I was not disappointed in the winter of the kindly North. And since that season has been so much maligned by Englishmen rendered by custom insensitive to its charm, I feel it my duty to offer a foreigner's vindication of it. Of course, if you approach the subject from the narrow, practical point of view, you will find little to say for the English winter. Not so, however, on the poetic plane. There one rises above such pedestrian inconveniences as mud and slush and wet clothes and chilly feet, and sees into the beauty of this season of nature's majestic rest. Man, it is true, does not rest in the bodily sense, but for him too this season is a time of blissful hibernation, of cosy retreat. The rigours of the sky, the bleakness of the earth, and the early onset of night compel him to spend most of his time in the shelter of his dens. Houses and rooms which in the summer are either unbearable or at best negative containers of necessary amenities acquire in winter a glamour and a meaning that are almost holy. Fires burn in them, giving warmth and colour; friendly lights show early in their windows, and can be seen from afar shedding their curtained glow upon the street. And what matters it if the street itself is unbearably wet and cold, and the sleet is driving in your face, since you are walking with eager feet towards a hospitable door round the corner, and all the wet and hurried feet before and behind you on the shining pavement are also making for familiar and friendly doors somewhere. Through the shop windows you see, in little havens of light and dry warmth, the late shoppers crowding at the counters buying their provisions for the week-end hibernation. Let the weather do its worst, you and they will be soon warming chilly feet on the fender, and eating enormous teas, with steaming crumpets. Human intercourse becomes more friendly in winter. Driven into his dens the human animal becomes more dependent on his kind. Round the fire

the intimacy of mind with mind reaches a degree unattainable in the open where man has nature for company. And lastly, there is the crowning pleasure of winter reading, the bliss of perfect uninterrupted communion with your books whose deadliest enemy is good weather. On a summer's day calls from the outside obtrude between you and every line, making impossible that complete fusion between the mind of reader and author which is necessary to the highest enjoyment. But in a deep armchair before the fire on a winter evening, behind curtained windows on which the pattering rain only serves to give further assurance of segregation from the outside world, the devout reader is alone in the universe with his book, like a lover with his love in the utter privacy of their bed.

CHAPTER XXIII

I ENTER THE LIFE OF A BRITISH FAMILY

IT was in the Christmas vacation of my second year that I was introduced to Levens's family. It consisted, as I first knew it at Oxford, of a mother, another son beside Robert, called Frank, and a daughter, Jean. There were also two married daughters, one in America and the other in Wales. Frank and Jean, younger than Robert by several years, were still at school, but came to Oxford in the holidays. Oxford had not always been their home, but Mrs. Levens, who had been moving about the country, living in rooms since her husband died and the children went to school, had struck root in Oxford when Robert went up to Balliol. Still living in rooms, she managed to make of Oxford a real home and the family headquarters where they all assembled in the holidays. And there in the Christmas vacation of 1924 I made their acquaintance. They were living in a small house in Observatory Street, or rather in its exceedingly small sitting-room. Mrs. Levens and Jean slept in the house, but Robert and Frank shared a room across the road. One could not imagine conditions less favourable to the maintenance of cheerful family solidarity, and yet, by dint of irrepressible enthusiasm and a spiritual vitality that can only be called militant, they succeeded in creating in that little room a family circle of infectious cheerfulness. Into this circle I was rapidly drawn, becoming in a very short time a daily caller and a participator in all the family activities. These were many and varied—country walks, cinema and theatre, literary games and lively discussions on everything in life.

In these discussions I found myself generally on the opposite side to the rest of the family. I was still an academic conservative who believed in the British Empire, and they were a family of robust rebels, led in their revolt by Mrs. Levens, a woman whose personality and intelligence, held in check in early life by the conventional upbringing of a Victorian upper-middle-class family, her marrige to a very Orthodox clergyman, and the process of bearing and bringing up five children in somewhat difficult circumstances, had only begun to expand and bloom in her middle forties, when her husband died and the children were off her hands. And like a belated spring, her blossoming had come on with a rush. She read Shaw and Wells and Anatole France; she became an agnostic and a socialist; she discarded the conventions of her early life and drifted away from her sisters and brother, living and giving her children an emancipated life, agreeably free from taboos, superstitions and hypocrisies in a small independent world of their own.

Jean and Frank displayed the spontaneity and unfettered ease of people who had never worn mental shackles. I had not met anybody like them before, and was greatly attracted by the novelty of their character.

The Levens's did not treat me as an equal by special right, as an Oriental who by acquiring British culture had individually risen to a superior plane and qualified, as it were, for honorary membership of the British race, which was rather what I hoped for in those days. They treated me in a novel and surprising manner, a manner which betrayed no assumption whatever of the superiority of the British people to Eastern races, and which made me feel that I had nothing to be ashamed of in my origin. More than this, in their revolt against British insularity, national snobbery and the imperial megalomania of Kipling, the Levens's went to the opposite extreme, and admired other peoples and races to the disparagement of the English. About the East and its peoples they were positively enthusiastic. A large proportion of Robert's friends at Oxford were Orientals. Before I had known the family for long, Jean said to me: "I envy you: it must be exciting to be a Syrian." Exciting to be a Syrian! Envied for it! It felt very much like putting your head between your legs and seeing things upside down. One evening, discussing genius, Frank suggested that each of us should write down on a slip of paper the names of the—in his or her opinion—ten greatest living men. My list did not contain a single Oriental name, whereas Gandhi figured on all theirs and Mustapha Kemal on one or two of them.

Before long I had reason to begin asking myself whether the Levens's broadmindedness would embrace the question of mixed marriage. Both I and Jean were very young. She was still at school, and I had another year to do at Oxford, so that there was no possible question of immediate marriage. Certain remote aspirations, however, began to confront me with this question. I knew that there was a strong prejudice among English people in general against marriage with Orientals, and I was afraid that the liberal outlook of the Levens's might stop short of that crucial point. For myself I was not at an age to allow rational considerations to interfere seriously with the promptings of the heart, but in so far as I reasoned at all about the matter, my conclusions confirmed my feelings. Married happiness, it seemed to me, depended much more on education, outlook and personal affinity than on racial origins, and I had never known a girl of any race with whom I had as much in common as it was obvious before long that I had with Jean. Besides, I was, by reason of my upbringing and the entire range of my personal experience, a fierce opponent of all racial theories. The conviction that the basic differences between one man and another were individual and not racial, was the cardinal article of my creed and the very basis of my self-respect.

About Mrs. Levens's attitude to this paramount question I was not left in doubt for long. One evening as I was sitting alone with her by the fire, the growing intimacy of a prolonged *tête-à-tête* brought us by devious routes to the question of mixed marriage. In an atmosphere of inward tension we discussed the question in an outwardly academic manner and with a studied avoidance of any personal implications, but I was greatly relieved to see that Mrs. Levens's ideas on the subject were exactly what I had hoped they would be. Indeed it was obvious that in her I had a sympathetic and potent ally against anybody who might object. But while making it clear that to me personally she had no objection at all, she uttered a warning about the necessity of taking into consideration the family connections on both sides, and the environment and conditions in which the mixed couple would have to live. She said that many Orientals were individually quite fitted to marry and live happily with English girls, but that conditions in the East and family connections might complicate matters if the husband's people were not sufficiently Westernized to get on well with a European daughter-in-law. There had been cases of Indians and Egyptians marrying English girls and getting on well with them until they went back with their wives to live in Eastern surroundings, sometimes with the husband's family in the same house, and then trouble had started for which neither the husband nor the wife were responsible, but merely the customs and conditions of the society in which they lived and from which the husband could not detach himself.

With this I agreed, of course, but pointed out that this danger existed particularly in the case of the Moslems, whose family life was entirely alien to Western conceptions. Mrs. Levens then changed her line of approach by remarking that even among Christians, she presumed, there was just as much of a general prejudice against mixed marriage as there was in England. English parents, objecting to their daughters marrying Easterners, often did not realize that the man's parents would object just as strongly, and from an equally superior position of racial pride and prejudice. There was a short palpitating silence after this general introduction, and then Mrs. Levens, still in that casual manner implying an exclusively academic and impersonal interest, asked me slowly and deliberately whether, for instance, my parents would approve of my marrying an English girl. Despite all the affected casualness in her voice, the question came out charged with personal dynamite. It was a warning as well as a question. Her manner said, in fact: "Are you sure your parents would feel all right about this? Is it wise of you to get so embroiled before you've found out?" My face flushed beyond the glow induced in it by the fire, but I replied with an equal affectation of detachment, that I was sure my parents would not object to my marrying an English girl if they were satisfied that she was the right sort for me.

In giving this answer I was lying, at least on a short-range view of things. I was not afraid of any inherent incompatibility between my family and an English daughter-in-law, but I knew that at the beginning at least they would not at all like the idea of my marrying an English girl, particularly as they were imbued with the general idea of British snobbery and racial arrogance. There was an unfortunate mixed-marriage precedent on my mother's side of the family, which was taken as the classic example of the folly of Syrians marrying English girls. A cousin of my mother's had married an English girl, considerably older than himself, whom he had once met on a boat. By all accounts she must have been individually a very objectionable person. She was deliberately unpleasant to his family when he brought her to Syria, she showed nothing but contempt for the country and its people, she refused to adapt herself in any way, remained an aloof stranger and finally took her husband away to America, and they never saw him again.

Although I had foreseen some initial resistance from my parents, I had not at all anticipated the uncompromising fierceness of the opposition I actually encountered when, deciding that the moment had come for an informal announcement, I wrote to tell them about Jean. I wrote very tactfully and eloquently. I gave a very propitiating account of Jean and her family, emphasizing their cosmopolitan outlook, freedom from racial snobbery and warm-hearted friendliness towards the East. I mentioned how most of Robert's friends at Oxford were Orientals, and how the family on the whole got on better with Indians and Egyptians than with true-blooded insular Britons. I made it clear that I was not meditating anything rash such as a premature marriage while I was still at the University. I did not even announce an engagement. I merely told them that I was in love with Robert's sister (of whom I had often spoken in my letters) and that she was in love with me; that apart from that we were very good companions and seemed to have much in common with each other; and that we had made up our minds to get married in some three or four years' time, when I had taken my degree and worked for some time and had enough money of my own to support a wife.

To this innocuous and by no means irrevocable decision my parents' reaction, conveyed in a ten-page letter by return of mail, was devastating in its bitter hostility. If I had expected a squall this was a typhoon. But the storm came chiefly from my mother. My father expressed pained disappointment that I should have chosen the companion of my life without consulting my parents and regardless of what their feelings might be. But my mother was angry and anguished beyond restraint. Had she brought me up all those years to lose me as soon as I was beyond her sight to the first girl that I met, a girl of alien race, an English girl? Was I a fool, and did I not know what the English were

like, how they despised Orientals, and how they could never adapt themselves to other ways of life than their own? Did I not remember (I knew that damned example was coming!) the case of George and Dora? Of course I was stupidly in love and could not think, so she proceeded to think for me and a tale unfold of my future miseries if I married an English girl. My wife, when the honeymoon was over, would begin to despise me and regret that she had ever married an Oriental. Under her influence our children would learn to despise me, and I should soon become an outcaste in my own family. My wife would soon find living in the East unbearable. She would not want to mix with Syrians, and she would not be able to mix with British people because they would have nothing to do with an English girl married to an Oriental. She would uproot me from my native soil, and drag me away from the blue sky and warm sun of the Mediterranean to the dank mists of England. There, if I did not die of consumption, I should live on in misery, a stranger in a foreign land, an alien even among my wife and children. I would yearn in vain for my parental family, for the people of my race, for the words of my mother tongue, for the dishes of my native country. Did I think I could face a whole lifetime of roast beef and boiled vegetables consumed under sunless skies?

I wrote again, immediately. I reasoned and pleaded. I reminded them that there was no question of my getting married for another three or four years; that in the meantime they could see Jean and make up their minds about her; that three or four years was a good test for the solidity of an attachment, and that if there were inherent incompatibilities between me and Jean, they could be expected to declare themselves during that time of testing. I exercised all my powers of persuasion to convince my mother that the picture she had drawn for herself of Jean and of my future married life was ludicrous. But it was all in vain. The typhoon went on raging, mail after mail, week after week. With my father I came to an agreement to ignore the subject for the time being and correspond about other things, but no such provisional settlement was possible with my mother. Her distress was very painful to me, but I knew that she was wrong, that when she met Jean she would change her mind, that in time all would be well. But I could do nothing about it just then. The weekly storms in envelopes went on coming, and for the whole of my last year at Oxford a state of acute strain, a wide and forbidding gulf existed between me and my parents.

This state of things accentuated the conflict between me and the East, driving me deeper into the bosom of England. Jean and "Schools" were the two dominant facts of my third and last Oxford year. "Schools" was a limited liability. I went to my lectures, did my three or four hours' reading every day and wrote my weekly essays

for my tutor—and that was all. The rest of the time I spent with Jean and her family. I used to cycle to their house every day immediately after lunch, and arrive just in time to join Jean in the scullery over the washing-up. Jean at that time was the family slave. A year had passed since the Christmas vacation in Observatory Street, and Mrs. Levens had taken a furnished house on the Iffley Road for the following Christmas season. In this house there congregated Frank, home for the holidays from school, where he was still a pupil; Robert, home for the holidays from Haileybury, where he was teaching; Janet, the married daughter from America, Mrs. Levens herself, and Jean, who had left school and was now permanently living with her mother, who was in bad health, and looking after her. The daughter from America was also in bad health, and the other two members of the family being men, most of the house-work devolved on Jean. Partly in order to be with Jean all the time, and partly in order to enable her to finish her work quickly so that we could go out together, I attached myself to her as a permanent assistant in the kitchen and scullery, thus following up my morning communion with the philosophers and historians with an assiduous application to the earthly tasks of drying dishes, sweeping and mopping the floor, ironing, cooking and laying the table. Brothers Robert and Frank came down occasionally to help, but my devotion to the work was so obviously greater than theirs, as was also my reward, that they did not stay long on these visits.

When these domestic duties were over we would join the family in the living-room and there would be lively arguments on books and plays and the League of Nations, and sex and the Labour Government and metaphysics and the new régime in Italy under that grotesque man Mussolini. There would also be bouts of the famous Word and Question game, when each of us would take a pencil and paper and dash off a few lines of verse, making fun of each other and perpetuating in song all our topical jokes.

When the family was not in session, Jean and I would mount our bicycles and sally forth by ourselves. In the afternoons and on Sunday mornings, when the weather was fine, we would strike out into the country, pedalling hard, our cheeks tingling and our eyes watering at the corners under the lash of the dry sharp wind—beyond Headington, over Boar's Hill, down to the Trout Inn, or along the flat, straight stretches of the Woodstock and Banbury Roads. In the winter months these rides were restricted by the shortness of the day and the inclemency of the weather, but when the spring and summer came, and the days became warm and endless, we would go out for whole long afternoons, or for the entire day on Sundays, and ramble slowly, lazily about the softly undulating, softly glowing, drowsy countryside. We would explore every little village, turn into every leafy traffic-forsaken lane, sniffing the warm scents of the fields and farms, and following

every pleasing prospect until we came to one more pleasing. And when we felt tired and hot with the fatigue and heat of energy pleasantly expended, we would stop, climb over a stile and eat a meal on the cool grass, not far from browsing horses, and cows whisking lazy tails at lazy, droning insects. The sky might be a clear sharp blue or blurred with a vaporous haze, or mellowing into the mild cool radiance of the late afternoon, or sparkling with a fresh crispness after a short cleansing shower, as though an enormous sponge had been passed swiftly over its blue porcelain. And under this life-giving sky, suffused in every fibre and every cell with its pervading warmth, lay the large green earth, full-bellied, ripening lazily to maturity. In one of its cooler corners, shaded by a tree or a hedge we would lie and drowse, sharing with earth its intoxicated bliss, watching the sleek fat cows, the horses swishing their tails, the gently-quivering leaves of the tall elms, and on the horizon the low line of the curving hills. In the shadow of the hedges and under the elms, I drank in the beauty of the English summer in large and filling draughts as I had before savoured the more sombre and mysterious delights of the English winter beside the fire-place of my little room in College. And I loved England in summer, as I had loved her winter.

On these excursions Jean and I talked of life and the future. At that time we thought that our future was going to be in Florence, and there, on the slopes of Fiesole, we chose a small villa and furnished it, and went on visiting it day after day.

In the evenings we went to the theatre. The Oxford Playhouse had just been opened and to it we went regularly once a week, and saw Ibsen, Musset, Pirandello, Strindberg, Chehov, Galsworthy, Barrie and many others. The drama was another European art of which I had known next to nothing before I came to England. There was no drama in Arabic literature. Since the beginning of the 20th century a few theatrical companies, formed by actors trained in Europe, had performed in Egypt and Syria, but they were crude and all their plays were translations of European works that sounded grotesquely unreal in Arabic. The only plays I had seen before going to England was a French play acted in Cairo, an Arabic play produced on an improvised stage at a town in Syria (with which, being eight or nine years old at that time, I was tremendously thrilled, partly because seeing it meant that I was allowed to sit up into the mysterious hours of the night usually reserved for grown-up people, and partly on account of the imposing beards and lurid make-up of the actors), and two English operettes produced by amateur troupes at Alexandria: the *Chocolate Soldier* and the *Mikado*, to which I had been taken by Mr. Reed during my school-days.

There was the New Theatre as well as the Playhouse, and its programme that year included three full-course feasts: the whole of

Shaw by the Macdonna Players, the whole of Gilbert and Sullivan by the D'Oyle Carte Company, and a dozen or so Shakespeare plays by the Stratford Players. To every single play and opera in this glorious banquet Jean and I went at a total cost of a handful of shillings. Having to choose between seeing only a few of them in comfort, and seeing the whole dazzling procession in comparative discomfort, we chose the latter, and night after night stood in the interminable queues that besieged the gallery door for hours before the ticket-window opened. Usually we aimed at the eightpenny seats, but on a few special occasions we permitted ourselves the luxury of the one-and-fourpenny's. Only those who have stood in an Oxford Gilbert and Sullivan gallery queue can really understand what powers of physical endurance and moral resolution are required for this task. To make sure of getting in at all we had to go at least two hours before the opening of the low, clandestine, side-street door; and even then the queue of grim, dogged heroes would be sprawling like a speckled snake down the pavement and round the corner. To the lower and ever-growing extremity of this snake Jean and I, two more speckles, would attach ourselves, and there stand often under a wet sky, shifting our weight from leg to leg, and feeling the pressure of the queue growing behind us. The vigil, however, had its minor comforts. A man stood by roasting chestnuts and serving them out in paper cones, and we always had a book with us which helped us to while the time if we were lucky enough to stand near a light and it did not happen to be raining.

But it was worth it. Seeing Shakespeare on the stage after having known him for years only in print was very much like meeting at last in the flesh somebody you have already known and liked through correspondence. You are anxious to know if your idea of him is correct, if his speech will be like his letters, if his face is as pleasant as his words. This had happened to me in my first year when I saw *Henry IV* produced by the OUDS with a magnificent incarnation of Falstaff, which immediately transformed Sir John from an agreeable acquaintance in the suburbs of my affection into a life-long boon companion and friend. Then had come the solemn thrill of seeing *Hamlet*, *Hamlet* which I had done with Mr. Reed, which I had read and re-read until I knew most of it by heart, and about which I had read everything that Hazlitt and Coleridge and Bradley and all the other critics had ever said. In a reverent ecstasy I had watched the curtain go up, seen the sombre battlements, heard Bernardo and Marcellus speak in the dark, caught the first glimpse of the figure in black. One scene in particular cast a spell on me, the memory of which not a thousand plays can efface. The Ghost disappearing slowly behind the battlements; Hamlet, only a moment after vowing to sweep to his revenge swifter than meditation or the thoughts of love, lying prostrate on a flight of steps, and the slow irrevocable seconds slipping past,

their passage marked only by the light of dawn, orange and purple, deepening imperceptibly behind the castle walls and with that inexorable deepening, symbol of the iron march of time against the helpless figure on the steps, portending Hamlet's final doom.

One of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas clashed with my weekly tutorial, so I went to ask my tutor to change the hour. "Do you consider," he asked in his pompous manner, "that the *Pirates of Penzance* is a necessary element in your education?" I replied that I did, and he granted my request.

CHAPTER XXIV

I LEAVE OXFORD

AND so my third and last year at Oxford drew to its end, and "Schools" began to loom high and imminent on the horizon, and besides "Schools," equally high and imminent, loomed the prospect of my leaving Jean for three or four years, and confronting my still implacable parents, for I was to go back to Syria for a few months before I joined my uncle at Florence.

The last few weeks passed in a hectic rush of final preparation, and then the day of reckoning came and I walked down the "High" with hundreds of others in cap and gown and white tie to render account for my three years' work. We walked into the judgement hall, sat down and wrote feverishly, came out and walked in again. And so "Schools" week rushed past, crammed with the history of the ages. For seven days three hundred young men and women sat there writing eagerly, anxiously, with the shades of Alfred and Aristotle, and Nelson and Napoleon, and the endless Edwards and Henrys, and the Whigs and Tories, and the burghers of London and the Sansculottes, and Lord Beaconsfield bringing back peace with honour, and George the Third's mother saying "George be a king" and Queen Victoria unamused, and Mr. Dunning attacking the Crown and Burke declaiming on America, and Lord Palmerston shaking Europe to protect a Portuguese gentleman in Greece, and a thousand other minor ghosts all stalking invisibly along the silent corridors in a confused and confusing pageant like the march-round after a fancy-dress ball.

After "Schools" came the month of anxious waiting for the viva and the result of all one's academic hopes. My life in College had come to its end. I took leave of the little room that had been my cheerful private home for two years, the quiet study in which I had had my books and written my essays, the cosy scene of early romantic teas with Jean and Mrs. Levens, the stormy scene of high debate on life and death and everything visible and invisible. The pictures came down from the walls, the African leopard skin was removed from the top of the bookcase, the shelves emptied and everything packed for a new journey to a new home. For the last time I walked down winding stair-case No. 7 and went to live with Jean and her family until the viva and my departure from England. The daughter from America had left, but Robert and Frank were home for the summer holidays, and so for a few days before I left the family as I had known it in the early days of Observatory Street was re-united, and we had a final burst of our old games and laughter. But the games this time were

incomplete and a cloud hung above the laughter, for Mrs. Levens, after a long and stubborn resistance had been compelled to take to her bed, and we all knew that it was a return of the cancer which she had had ten years before, and that though she might still live a long time she would never be up again.

My viva, when it came, proved a very perfunctory affair. Any hopes I might have had of a borderland struggle for a First were instantly dashed by a few pointless and formal questions which unmistakably indicated a settled and indubitable Second. Two days later the results were announced on the board. Jean and I went down to see them. We elbowed our way through the seething crowd. My name with a big bold A headed the Second Class. On our way out we met my tutor striding in. "Well?" he asked. I told him. He gave me a comforting pat on the back. "My fault," he said, "not yours."

De Selincourt got a First in Physics. He and I and my other friends had a round of farewell lunches and dinners and parted each to go his separate way. A few days remained to me at Oxford, and these I spent entirely with Jean. The prospect of going home and meeting my hostile parents weighed heavily on my mind. Waging a distant war by correspondence for nine months was one thing, and going to face the withering fire of speech was another. I was still convinced that in time I should win them over, but how long that time would be I could not tell, and judging by my mother's letters the prospects of a quick conversion seemed remote. Sometime before Jean, in an attempt to allay my mother's fears by establishing personal contact with her, had written her a long and friendly letter. To this my mother had replied politely but still irreconcilable, appealing to Jean in pathetic terms to release me and so avoid ruining my life and hers. My father, towards the end of the year and as the time for my return home approached, had tended to become more friendly in his letters and to show me in various ways that in spite of the existing tension his love for me had not diminished. He had taken a great interest in my examinations and from time to time referred in warm terms to my approaching home-coming.

Then something happened suddenly which completely altered the prospects of the immediate future. A few days before I was due to leave for Syria I got a cable from my father telling me that my uncle was in Florence and wanted me to join him there immediately instead of going first to Syria. The cable also contained my father's approval for this change of plans. For myself, I was very pleased. In the first place I was reprieved from the necessity of seeing my mother in the immediate future, and secondly this call meant (for so I naturally assumed at the time) that I should start on my work at once, and I was very anxious to do so because I felt that until I started to earn money

the prospect of marriage and that little villa outside Florence would remain perturbingly vague.

In a great hurry I altered all my plans and bookings, said good-bye to Jean and left England for Florence on a thundery morning in early August, 1925.

My three years at Oxford lay behind me, like a film-reel rolled up. Out of the window, as the train swept on to London, I looked at the last shot of the film: the towers and steeples rising serenely into the sky, proclaiming, with the quiet assurance of their grey and ancient stone, the permanence of Oxford through the centuries against the ephemeral succession of its generations. Fourteenth-century monks, walking away in their sandals, had seen that picture; and 18th-century aristocrats from the window of the stage-coach; and Victorian gentlemen in the first lumbering trains. For a second the picture was there filling the screen, and then it vanished.

What had I got from Oxford? What sort of person was I when I left it? What was my outlook on the life I was going out to meet?

I had enjoyed my three years immensely. I had had a diversified and enriching experience, as a result of which I felt more intensely alive, more sensitively aware of myself and of the good things of life around me. My mind had been exercised, sharpened, nourished and left demanding more exercise and nourishment. My horizon had been widened. Pleasant, endless prospects fell under my eye inviting exploration. I believed, as I sat in my compartment rushing on towards London and the world, that I had had a complete education, that I had been introduced to all that was worth while in life; and I felt that I was a full person in contact with the whole of reality.

I was going out into the world as a product of the British liberal tradition, imbued with the humanist spirit, equipped for a life of cultured self-realization. I took the world in its broad outlines for granted. I believed that the British way of life, based on liberal democracy and private enterprise, was the consummation of social and political development and the pattern of progress for the rest of the world. There might still be imperfections in it, but these could be removed by continued advance along existing lines. Liberal democracy would become more complete and the rest of the world would gradually approximate to the British model. The East would do so under direct British guidance, until in the fulness of time it was able to rule itself.

No revolutionary influence, no new idea—although there were many such beginning to show their heads at the ancient university—had made any impression on me. The Oxford that had formed me was the Oxford of the past. Socialism I regarded as the misguided dream of cranks, the Labour movement as a dangerous attempt to upset the

nature of things and wreck civilization. A phrase I had heard years ago when I was at school, that the greatness of England would be over when the workers came to power, had stuck in my mind. The argument was that the workers, unlike the landed aristocracy, had no stake in the country, and could not therefore be expected to have a patriotic ideal or care what happened to the " Sceptred Isle " as long as they got a little more money for themselves. Intellectual socialism might not be so dangerous, but was all the same completely mistaken in its challenge to private property and private enterprise, the basis of all initiative and all progress. I had heard Lord Hailsham speak at the Union in defence of private enterprise, and it had seemed to me that his arguments were unanswerable. They were mainly practical arguments, but I had felt sure that if Burke was there that night he would, from his lofty pedestal, have spoken on the same side as the noble lord. I could almost hear the stately periods rolling out, bearing the irrefutable argument, pregnant with the wisdom and philosophy of the conservative thesis . . . the great order of nature, the pre-ordained inequality of men demanding a just equality of opportunity; the freedom of competition, under humane and impartial laws resulting in the achievement of the highest excellence, ensuring to the individual his meet reward, and to society the benefit of his uttermost endeavour; the delicately adjusted economy of the body politic, the complex and precarious harmony resulting from the mutual dependence and co-operation of the several classes, each fulfilling its necessary function . . . and so on.

Even the League of Nations and the new internationalism had failed to make any appeal to me. My political horizon was still rigidly bounded by the boundaries of the sovereign nation-state, and I did not believe either in the possibility or in the desirability of a larger form of political union. My conception of the world in relation to myself, as I stood on its threshold that August morning in 1925, was an individualist self-centred conception. I thought of the world as a place that provided for me wonderful opportunities of cultured enjoyment and self-realization, an extension of Oxford with its diversified charm and sheltered refinement. My chief ambition was to go on developing my personality, extending the field of my experience, enriching my individual life. The development of the individual personality seemed to me the ultimate object and justification of civilization, a development, of course, theoretically related to moral values, subject to the " categorical imperative," following the lines of humane and decent feeling, but all the same an egoistical development, the self-realization of an individual unintegrated in anything larger than himself. And the world in which I saw this self-realization was the cloistered world of the intellectual.

My early agnosticism had been confirmed at Oxford, but I had not

found a new faith to replace my religious belief. I was not conscious of needing any faith beyond the belief that life was an experience worth having and that the individualist pursuit of truth, beauty and goodness was an adequate ideal for a civilized man and a complete substitute for the religious way.

CHAPTER XXV

THROUGH ITALY IN TRANSIT

THE train raced and roared through France. Big rain bullets crashed against the glass of the windows with a fury malevolent in its seeming purposefulness, and lightning serpents darted and twisted up and down the sky. Every second hurled me away farther and farther from England and my three years at Oxford. The fury of the train, that mad eager leaping through space, seemed to be directed against me personally. It was as if the train and the engine-driver and Paris-Lyons-Mediterranée had conspired with fate to tear me away at the frenzied speed of eighty miles an hour from all that I had enjoyed and loved during the past three years, adding distance to time, piling up sickening stretches of earth on to the passing hours, multiplying duration by a second and more cruel dimension. I tried to cheer myself up with the prospect of my imminent job. I was very anxious to start work, not only because work meant marriage in a predictable future, but also in order to prove to myself that I could earn my living; that my abilities, which till then had only expressed themselves in academic ways, were actually worth something in terms of money, that ruthless criterion of the right to survive in the world. Although I prided myself on the kind of idealism that consists in airily despising the practical considerations of life from a comfortable armchair after a satisfying meal, I was at heart afraid of failing in practical life and anxious to prove to myself that my fears were groundless. I had known many men inferior to myself in intellectual gifts who were successful in their spheres of non-intellectual work and earning comfortable incomes. I could not, for all my consciousness of intellectual and moral superiority, help respecting the money-earning qualities of these men and wondering whether I possessed them in any degree at all. It was the instinctive biological respect deep down in me, below Shakespeare and the philosophers, for the qualities that ensure survival in the struggle for existence. I concentrated on the prospect of impending work. I handled mentally masses of linen imported from Ireland, supervised their embroidery in Florence, shipped them to America. I sat competently behind my desk, wrote business letters, drafted cables, signed cheques, wrote letters to Jean telling her how productively busy I was. And all the time marriage and the Florentine villa were getting nearer and nearer. But then the accursed engine-driver would lash at his beast with another shovelful of coal, and the insatiable devourer of the miles, as though out to annihilate the whole of Space at one blow, and summoning incredible

reserves of energy, would leap forward with a more savage fury than ever. And I would come back to the present and think with an aching heart not of the city that lay at the end of the diminishing distance ahead, but of that which lay at the end of the growing distance we were leaving behind.

I arrived at Florence thinking that I was coming to it for good. I only stayed in it for two days. An appalling shock awaited me in my uncle's office when I made my way to it as soon as I had had time to wash and change my clothes. My uncle, affable and generous as ever, explained with a certain embarrassment that he only wanted me for a couple of months. The firm, apparently, had got into trouble with the customs authorities over certain inaccurate declarations—a universal and perfectly respectable practice—all the chaps did it—but not strictly in accordance with the law. There was some kind of an enquiry going on, that would take about two months, and for that period the existing manager, who was implicated in this irregularity (not the Professori, by the way, he had left the year before) could not officially represent the firm. Some titular, acting manager was wanted, just to sit in the shop-window as it were and sign documents, while the real manager continued to do all the work unofficially. My uncle had naturally thought of me. There was nothing difficult about it, no real work at all, just a mere formality of an arrangement. All I had to do was to sign for the firm and appear in its name. For this sinecure my uncle would pay all my living expenses and give me fifteen pounds a month for the two months. . . . And after the two months, I asked with a growing faintness in my heart? After the two months, when that little matter of the inaccuracy had been settled with the American customs, there would be nothing more for me to do. My uncle was very sorry. He had intended to send the Florence manager to the branch he had recently opened at Shanghai, but there had been the riots and the Shanghai venture had ended in the closing of the branch and a substantial loss. The Florence manager, who was on a two-year contract, could not be disposed of and so there was no room for me. Perhaps in the future, when the two-year contract had expired, or if another branch could be opened in some other promising country. In the meantime, did I accept the offer of the titular job for two months? I did not. Disappointed and disgusted, I was torn between chagrin at this unexpected vanishing of the prospect of a settled career, and relief at having got out of a job which involved irregularities of the kind my uncle had mentioned. I expressed a desire to proceed immediately to Syria, and booked a berth on the first boat.

Slowly, the full implications of this sudden change in the plan of my life began to dawn on me. It was not only that the prospect of matrimony abruptly lost all definiteness and could not regain it until I had found another permanent job. A far more important consider-

ation was that the new job, as far as I could see, would have to be in the East, which meant that Jean and I, instead of going to a neutral country, so to speak, and leading an absolutely independent life as a couple of cosmopolitans, free from all family and national complications, would have after all to live in the East, surrounded by influences and conditions that were little favourable to mixed marriage.

I had no fears at all that Jean would hesitate to go to the East, but I felt vaguely apprehensive about our future life. The future did not look so certain and congenial as before, and there was no definite prospect of the money that was to rent a substitute for the Florentine villa even in the distant and menacing East.

The feeling I had felt on the French train that the agencies of motion were my personal enemies came on me again on the boat, but with a difference. Here was no annihilating speed, no spiteful devouring of the miles, but an implacable compulsion all the more terrible for being slow and apparently endless, a cold unhurried doom that dragged on day after day from sunrise to sunset and from sunset to sunrise, as the ship steamed on leaving a lazy white line behind it as if to measure those heartless distances.

The boat is approaching Port Said, will be there to-morrow morning. The Damietta lighthouse is already visible, flashing intermittently on the horizon. The closeness of the air is unmistakably that of the Egyptian summer. To-morrow I shall wake up to see Tarbooshes and Gallabiyas swarming on the barges, and hear once again Arabic chattering—and I am coming back to my people, to live and work among Syrians and Egyptians. I am coming back to the East for good, this East from which I sprang, which is ruled by the West, and from which I have tried so hard to dissociate myself. True I have many friends in Egypt, chiefly school-friends, boys who have received the same kind of education as I have, and who are as much Westernized as I am. But the general mass of people, customs, traditions, aspirations, called the East is uncongenial to me now, and it is with a good deal of aversion that I am returning to it. I have an uncomfortable feeling that I shall be drawn into contact with many things that are alien to my heart. I shall have to put up with many observances I dislike. I cannot go back and live as a complete Englishman. I realize that. I had not severed—I could not sever all the ties that bound me to my land of origin. What will be my position, the kind of life I am to lead now? Is a compromise possible, reconciling the two opposites? Or shall I be detached from both, discontented, unable to enjoy the one, and not allowed to enjoy the other?

And yet, whatever the outcome may be, I am immensely gratified at what I have achieved, and would not, for all the world, have it otherwise. It is now fifteen years since I gazed enthralled at the epic

pictures of *Our Island Story*, and in these fifteen years I have made that Island my homeland. I have realized the great ambition of my childhood. Through my persistent determination I have received an English education—the best education that any Englishman can aspire to. I have made English my language, in which I can speak and write as well as most educated Englishmen. And finally this process of affiliation is to be crowned by my marriage to an English girl, that is to say I am going to be the next best thing to a natural son of England, a son-in-law. Surely that is the nearest any Gentile can get to being a Jew. Now I can meet any Englishman on a footing of equality. I need no longer feel ashamed of myself, inferior. Everything that an Englishman can boast of having, apart from the blood in his veins, I have acquired.

My fears of a conflict are greatly accentuated by my being engaged to be married to an English girl, and by my parents' opposition to that engagement. I know that my parents are wrong, for they do not know the girl and they imagine her to be other than she is. I know that their fears are groundless. But their opposition worries me, forces on me the feeling of a conflict—a conflict between all that my education stands for and all the influences of my home and nationality. What if they persist in their error, if they refuse to be convinced, if they continue to look upon the girl I want to marry as a hostile stranger? Then there will be a conflict. My people's opposition to my proposed marriage has the effect of arousing all my English sympathies in an array of aggressive self-defence. I feel that when I get home I shall be alone, cut off from my English environment. Victoria College will be far from me, and so will be Oxford and the whole of England, my English friends and Jean. And I shall be surrounded by hostile influences—hostile, that is to say, to my intended marriage and, by association, to all my English predilections. I shall have to be on the defensive then. I must guard these predilections, my tastes and ideas, guard and preserve them intact. I must not allow them to weaken under the constant action of these hostile forces. I shall have to fortify myself, and prepare for a siege, in case my people thought they could wear down my resolution. I think of my books—a mighty array of English literature and history, a formidable link with Oxford and England. I shall read them constantly. I derive comfort from this thought. I shall also write often to my friends at Victoria College and in England. Then there are my pictures which I had at Oxford. With them and with my books I will reconstruct my college room, try to re-create that cherished atmosphere—and entrenched behind these fortifications I will defy the East to reclaim me, my parents to make me abandon the girl I want to marry. In my fear I become defiant, and the whole East looms out before me uncongenial and menacing.

CHAPTER XXVI

HOMECOMING

MY preparedness for battle was tragically out of place. Not war but grief was awaiting me at home. There was an uncanny silence over the house as my car, loaded with my armoury of books and pictures, pulled up at the gate, and I instantly noticed that my father's bedroom window was shuttered. The oddity puzzled me for a fraction of a second, but no explanation suggested itself to my mind revolving rapidly in the excitement and apprehension which I felt at the prospect of meeting my angry parents. Remembering the excited stir which in previous years instantly answered the noise of my expected car and the rush of joyous greetings to the door, I was chilled by the continued silence of the house after I had got out of the car and while I helped the driver to unstrap the luggage. I could have left the man to do the job alone, but I was glad of an excuse to put off for another few seconds the now truly terrible moment of meeting my mother. How was I to meet her? How was she to meet me? Like the anger in her letters, or like old times, or with a cold kiss and a smile born of love but slain by anger at their birth? The unwelcoming hush continued, the absence of anxious eager steps, of calling and answering voices. The year before I had heard the servant calling my sister, my sister calling my mother, my mother calling my father, and my name echoing and re-echoing round the house, and then a torrent of steps and voices in laughter rushing down the passage. But now there was not a sound in the house. Nobody had even come out to see who was in the car. If this was the sort of welcome I was to get, this wilful hostile neglect, I would pack up and leave home immediately. It was difficult enough to walk into the house at all; nobody seemed to want me to walk in. And then suddenly I heard footsteps, but they were not eager and there were no voices with them. My sister and my uncle came out alone. They tried to smile, to look glad to see me, but their manner was strained. I still thought this coldness, this retarded and restricted welcome, was my punishment and felt very sad that my sister should also be feeling like that towards me, for there was no mistaking the coldness in her manner . . . and then for the first time I noticed that she was wearing black, and the truth, suddenly and unmistakably revealed by that last clue, flashed into my mind, supplying an immediate explanation of all those other little signs I had so completely misinterpreted—the silence, the shuttered window, my sister's forced welcome.

My father had died the night I had left Florence. That afternoon

he had received my cable telling him that I was leaving for home at once, and had been thrown into a state of such happy excitement that he had talked and laughed animatedly all the evening. Too animatedly for his hardened arteries. The joy my message brought him had called up Death from the eager coursing of his blood, and soon after going to bed he had had a cerebral hæmorrhage and all those happy anticipations were suddenly blotted out by the oozing pressure of a pint of dark fluid on the grey convolutions that house the hopes and memories and infinite thoughts of man.

A disturbing mixture of feelings surged in me when I learned of my father's death. Grief and relief were so intermingled that I am not sure now which came foremost. I had loved and admired my father deeply. The awe in which I had held him as a child had completely faded away from my consciousness in the following years and had, as he became older and weaker in health, as the quick resounding step slowed down and the robust frame shrank and drooped, been replaced by a great tenderness. As I grew older and knew him better I had become aware of a strong affinity between us, had discovered that the things that moved and inspired him moved and inspired me, and that my faith in life and joy in living were derived from him. The aggressiveness of his early manner had turned in recent years into a profound religious humility which those who had known him before found very touching. Deprived by his disease of the more active joys of life he had for the last four years found a great and quiet happiness in reading and writing, growing flowers, going to church and above all in wide and simple human intercourse and laughter. He had been very good to me during my three years at Oxford, often stinting himself to send me the two hundred and fifty pounds which I required annually apart from my scholarship. My last memory of him was his image, in caftan and tarboosh, waving to me good-bye the day of my departure the year before. We had said good-bye at the house and my car had left, but the road looped round the hill on which our house stood, and he had walked quickly down the footpath to intercept the car at the bottom of the hill with a final wave. He had got there just in time, and stood waving until the car disappeared, waving and, I thought, wondering whether his arteries would hold out another year. It was this picture, of all the thousand photographs of him that lay scattered about the cupboard of my mind, that shot up into the focus of consciousness when I learned the news. I no longer minded the caftan and tarboosh. They had for me in that picture a simple and moving dignity.

My grief was charged with bitter regret over the feud that had clouded our relations during that last year. I had been waiting all those months to see my parents in order to convince them that they were wrong and make my peace with them. My father particularly had not sounded implacable, and I had felt certain that as soon as I

reached home things would be all right with him. A little crack, supervening by five days, in a hardening rubber tube, had prevented that reconciliation for ever. Yet in spite of this bitter grief, I was, to my shame, conscious of a feeling of relief. My father's death totally eclipsed the issue which till a moment before had filled me with the most intense apprehension—the feud with my mother and the prospect of meeting her. A stark immediate tragedy held the centre of the stage, and beside it there clearly could be no place for the now remote and very secondary subject of Jean and my future marriage. From being the burning question of the moment, that subject had been suddenly shot out of existence, and I experienced a great relaxation of tension. Instead of coming to face my mother's wrath I had arrived just in time, so my uncle and sister made me feel, to bring her a comfort of which she was much in need. I was, in fact, not the returning prodigal, but a kind of hero arriving in the nick of time, my father's heir, the head of the family, the master of the house. I did not see my mother at once. She was in her room, still completely overcome by grief and attended by a number of women friends and relatives. But the house soon filled up with my uncles and aunts and cousins. The news of my dramatic arrival had rapidly spread round the village, and they came over from their houses, and our neighbours came, and there was no doubt about it, I felt that I was filling the centre of an important stage.

My meeting with my mother was very painful, but the painfulness was entirely on account of her grief. Not a word was said about the subject of Jean. Nor was the subject opened during the following weeks, as my mother regained her self-control, and we began to talk about other things. Her manner was strained, but I liked to think that it was more in sorrow than in anger, and gradually the strain began to wear off and an affectionate naturalness crept into our relations, but still not a word was said about Jean, and my relief deepened and became settled in the conviction that all would be well.

I was unhappy during those weeks. My homesickness for England was great. I felt that I was in an alien land. I was afraid that years would pass before I could revisit my spiritual home. I could not live in isolation among my books and pictures; I was back in the East, chained to its uncongenial soil; and I had to find a job. Two possibilities offered themselves; teaching at the American University of Beyrouth, or a Government post in one of the British administrations in the Near East.

Mr. Lias, now retired from the headmastership of Victoria College, was living at Damascus, steeping himself in Arabic. He had been living in Syria ever since his retirement three years before, and it was in my summer vacations during those years that my great friendship with him, which had started in affectionate respect at School, had

developed. I now decided to go and see him, partly to consult him about my future and get testimonials and letters of introduction, and partly in order to spend a few days in his congenial company, in an English oasis in the heart of the Syrian desert. There I could talk about Victoria College and Oxford and England, and hear somebody who understood me talk the same language, and he and I would exchange our usual quips and badinage in light verse of which he was a great master, and have our usual good-humoured disputes over history and politics and literature.

There was a curious irony in my visit to Mr. Lias. He was an Orientalist who for upwards of twenty years had been learning Arabic, and who had now gone to Damascus to seek not only further erudition among the pundits of the old capital of the Omayyads, but a spiritual romantic comfort which he seemed to find in the old ways and traditions of the East, in the dignity and resignation of the Muslims (although he was a very pious Christian) and in the absence of what he regarded as the dross of modern European civilization. And to him, the seeker of this comfort, I, a son of the East, went to seek the solace of an English oasis.

The Druse revolt against the French had just started. The event had not, at the beginning, stirred in me deep feelings either way. On the whole I sympathized with the Druses. My childhood memories of the massacre of 1860, my old fear of the Druses lay now far behind me, in a remote limbo separated from my present consciousness by Victoria College and Oxford. I was not a Syrian nationalist, but I resented the presence of the French in Syria regarding them as intruders who stood between the country and a British administration.

When I arrived in Damascus, the battle was raging in Jebel Druse, some twenty or thirty miles away. Mr. Lias was a staunch supporter of the Druse cause. We sat up till a late hour talking about it. Mr. Lias said that the Christians in Damascus mistrusted the Druses and were afraid that the whole thing might take on a religious character and strike not only against the French but also against the Syrian Christians. We discussed the matter academically, as two detached observers. I did not feel that I was personally in any way involved in it. . . . Mr. Lias also said that bands of Druses had been reported in the vicinity of Damascus the night before; there might be some commotion in the city.

I was woken up in the small hours of the night by a quick succession of fire reports, shattering the silence over the sleeping city. They came from several directions, crackling and echoing among the surrounding hills. I sat up in my bed, startled, my heart drumming loudly . . . The Druses! And for a few moments, in the stillness and empty darkness of the night, Victoria College and Oxford fell away from me, fifteen years of cosmopolitan wanderings were obliterated,

and I was back in Beyrouth, in my grandfather's house, a little Christian boy afraid of the Druses. I pulled myself together and got up. Mr. Lias had also heard the shots and he too got up. We stood together out on the balcony under a brilliant sky, trying to spot the direction of the sound. I laughed at myself. It was 1925; I was a man of twenty-one, standing there with the late Headmaster of Victoria College; Abdulhamid had gone, and Mustapha Kemal ruled an amputated Turkey at Ankara; the French were in Syria; the League of Nations at Geneva . . . Still, England where I had been only two months before, seemed a long, long way off.

When I returned to Suk-el-Gharb, I found the place seething with excitement and a good deal of apprehension. There was no subject of talk but the Druses and their revolt. The Druse leader had issued a proclamation making it clear that the rising had nothing to do with religion, and was in no way aimed against the Christians. He had adopted the following slogan: "Religion belongs to God, the Motherland to all." But the Christians were afraid; they could not trust the Druses. The Christians wanted the French in Syria, wanted the French to protect them against the Moslem majority. It was all right for the Druses to invite the Christians to join them in a national revolt, or at least to remain benevolently neutral. The Christians wanted none of it, and the Druses in their hearts knew it. Hence, although the revolt was solely aimed against the French and had no anti-Christian bias in its inception, it was nevertheless the occasion of a conflict of purpose between Druse and Christian, in so far as the Druses were the enemies, and the Christians the supporters of the French occupation.

At Suk-el-Gharb the scare mounted from day to day. The Druses in arms, in spite of the lapse of sixty-five years, were the Druses of 1860. An atavistic state of mind sprang into being. There was something peculiarly fearful about the Druses. They were a mysterious sect. Their religion was an esoteric cult; they had always been regarded, even in peaceful times, as something of a secret society whose high priests pondered dark things in the jealously concealed depths of their minds. All these fears now flared up. Stories of atrocities against the Christians of the inland villages began to circulate, recalling the most hideous incidents of the great massacre. Wild rumours arrived at the village every day; the Druses were advancing, bands of them had been seen in the valley, armed and desperate; they might attack the village any night. The scare grew. Groups of villagers stood about the market-place every evening and every morning discussing the news. Even the sophisticated people from Beyrouth grew alarmed. It became a brave thing to wander about the village at night. In every house, every evening, people talked of nothing else. The old men of the village came with harrowing tales, sat round and reminisced again

about 1860, telling the stories I had heard in my childhood. My mother and sister took fright. The sophisticated people from Beyrouth decided that the mountains had become too unsafe. The French did not have sufficient forces; the Druses were beating them everywhere; the autumn was advancing and the days growing shorter. It was safer to move to Beyrouth. They began to move.

I too was infected with this growing apprehension. Our house stood rather outside the village, in a lonely spot on the hillside, with a pine wood behind it. There in the stillness and loneliness of the night my childhood fears, first recalled by the midnight shots I had heard in Damascus, came back to me in a feeling of intense irrational anxiety. I did not think there was any real danger; I disbelieved most of the stories I heard, which were obviously the wild rumours of panic; I could not see why a Druse rebel should want to slay me in my bed, yet I felt very uncomfortable, and was glad when we too decided to move to Beyrouth. Beyrouth was a large town and a seaport, and the French had adequate forces in it. Druse bands could not pounce on it in the night.

The question of a job had been settled. Through one of my uncles in the Sudan I had secured appointment as history lecturer at the Gordon College, Khartoum, on a two-year contract. Even if that did not lead on to anything more permanent it would give me time to look round for some other job either in the Sudan itself or in Egypt. I was happy at the prospect of work, and I liked the idea of going back to the Sudan, the scene of the greater part of my childhood, a land of so many happy associations for me. My job, however, did not start till January and till then I was to stay in Beyrouth with my mother.

Curiously enough the house we rented in Beyrouth was very near to the house in which I had spent the Syrian years of my childhood. It was in one of the old, predominantly Moslem quarters of the town. My grandfather had chosen that quarter because it was near the British Mission Girls' College where he taught; and we now chose it again because it was near the French Convent School to which my sister was going.

As we drove into Beyrouth on a late October afternoon, coming away from the mountains and the Druse danger, something of that old feeling of fear and depression that used to assail me when as a boy I returned every autumn to this city of Moslems and Turks came back to me, faint across the years, but unmistakable.

My old dislike of Beyrouth had never left me. Most of the streets were still narrow and dirty, bordered by smelly gutters. The houses, mostly ugly square boxes, with a pyramidal roof of red tiles and an invariable façade of three glass windows in the shape of a triple arch of ugly curves and proportions, crowded upon each other facing in different directions, and producing a mass effect of confused and

purposeless angles. The crowds in the old streets, the shopkeepers outside their shops looked to me coarse and dirty in their baggy sirwals and large wet bare feet in noisy clogs. Rubbish heaps often lay exposed on the road, outside a house or a shop, with flies swarming over them, and you often passed a corner that was used as a public urinal and advertised its function in foul odours and ugly flowing stains on the wall. True, much reconstruction and town improvement work was going on. Old streets were being pulled down, and new blocks of modern flats going up in several quarters, but the quarter in which our house was seemed to me little changed from what it had been in the days of my childhood. I had hated it then, contrasting it with the healthy freshness and beauty of the mountains; I hated it now more than ever, contrasting it with the cleanliness and refinement of Oxford, and felt ashamed to be connected with it.

It was just getting dark when we arrived at the house. The feeling of depression had deepened in me as we passed through those narrow, gloomy streets which I had known so well and feared as a boy, the streets of the high latticed windows where the black-shrouded women of the harem lived. We had passed the very spot at which, twelve years before, the day of the Italian bombardment, I had seen our Moslem milkman with that wild look in his eyes, and heard him call desperately on his prophet to strike a blow for Islam. The house stood dark and lifeless among a cluster of feebly lit, unfriendly-looking habitations. The street was empty and there was not a single light in it.

We had forgotten to bring electric bulbs and so had only candles for light that first evening. In their uncertain glow throwing monster shadows on the walls, my sister and I moved about the unfamiliar rooms, bringing in the luggage, while my mother, exhausted by the fatigue of the move, lay quietly on a couch in the hall. Suddenly a long wailing scream rent the air, coming from immediately below us. It was the agonized scream of a woman, and there was horror in it. Again it came, and again, and then it broke into a wild hysterical sobbing. There was a great commotion of hurried feet, and another voice, a man's, broke in, groaning hoarsely in company with the woman's sobbing. The feet passed immediately underneath our balcony, and a loud wailing chorus broke out from the house next door. I ran out on the balcony, and saw a procession going in there. There was very little light in the street, but it was obvious that they were carrying a body.

A few minutes later our landlady came up to tell us what it was. A young man had just been murdered, our neighbour's son, a boy of nineteen or twenty. He had gone out well and hearty a few hours before, and then was found with his throat cut on a lonely spot on the beach. That piercing scream had come from his mother when she saw him being carried home; his throat was slit from side to side. The

murderer had got away, but they thought it was a Moslem. The boy himself was a Christian. Fancy such things happening even when the French were in Beyrouth!

Fancy, indeed! For me this was another hideous echo from the past. The locality and the setting were exactly the same as in the days of my fear-haunted childhood. Our old house could almost be seen from our new one, and my grandfather, the centre of my childhood memories, the figure who symbolized the Christian side in the dread feud, was there again, sitting quietly in his armchair, reading the Bible after dinner. Outside in the dark narrow streets, the black bogeys flitted secretively, and next door a Christian youth lay dead with his throat slit by a Moslem; and far away behind the mountains the Druses were in arms, and daily legend reported massacres of Christian villages.

Intellectually I refused to believe all that I heard. I discounted most of the atrocity stories; I knew that the French were doing their best to foment the fears of the Christians and represent the Druse revolt as a religious rising in order to keep the Druses isolated and deprive them of any support or sympathy from the Christians. I knew all this, and I knew, a few days subsequently, that our neighbour's son, far from being a religious martyr, had been murdered by a fellow-Christian in a quarrel over a woman. And yet the effect of all those insidious influences was to re-create around me the hateful atmosphere of the Beyrouth I had known in my childhood. A few months before, I had been writing essays for my tutor from the academic calm of my little room at B.N.C. on the Eastern Question, an emancipated young man about to take "Schools," beyond the fears, above the prejudices of the unfortunate communities that lived on the eastern side of the Mediterranean. Fate had turned conjurer, and hey presto! I was back there myself, and it was more like 1910 than 1925; for the Christians feared the Moslems, and the Moslems hated the Christians because the Christians wanted the French while the Moslems wanted independence; and like the others I began, in spite of myself, to hate and fear and wish to get away from this hell which I had known before. I was happy when a new French High Commissioner arrived with reinforcements and "La paix pour ceux qui veulent la paix et la guerre pour ceux qui veulent la guerre"; but I was happier still, when a few days before Christmas I stood on the deck of a boat steaming out of Beyrouth harbour, and once again said good-bye to that receding shore which in spite of its superb natural beauty seemed to be incapable of breeding anything but fear and suspicion and hateful strife. Between the blue sky above and the bluer sea below, the towering shoulders of Sunnin gleamed immaculate in their cloak of virgin snow, but in the shadow of that noble sanctuary of nature lay the sordid human sore of Beyrouth.

CHAPTER XXVII

BACK TO THE SUDAN

EXULTANT at my escape from this oppressive prison-house, I walked to the bows of the ship, and looked ahead. A few hundred miles across the sparkling Mediterranean lay Egypt, and Egypt to me meant Victoria College, the home of my happy youth, the abode of Mr. Reed. Victoria College was the antithesis in miniature of all that I hated in Syria. A Druse boy, a Christian boy and a Moslem boy at Victoria College would be friends, brothers; there would be no dark gulfs of hate or suspicion between them; they would not feel different from one another; they would stand together against the world. Why? Because you took them away from their groups, you detached them from their original group loyalties, and you merged them, as individuals, into a new group with a new consciousness; you gave them a new loyalty, a loyalty that bound them together against the world, against the Jesuits and the Government schools and the Lycée Français. What then, was this not real progress, after all, not a real enlargement of the individual, but merely a transference of loyalty, a new combination of individual entities resulting in a new group? Was my passionate attachment to Victoria College, Mr. Reed and England really healthy? Did it not imply hostility to other cultures, to rival schools, in fact to all that part of the world which was neither England nor Victoria College? Was I the friend of all Egyptians and Greeks and Armenians and Jews, or only of those of them who had been to Victoria College. There was no getting away from it, it was a question of new groups for old, of substituting one loyalty for another. But then, was not the new group really less fanatical, more open and expandible? the new loyalty larger, more human? And could not groups and loyalties be made larger and larger, more enlightened and more tolerant, until there was only one group and one loyalty?

Meanwhile I still had little political sympathy with the group known as Egypt. Lord Lloyd had just been appointed High Commissioner for that country, and I welcomed the appointment. Not so the people of Egypt, who had heard of Lord Lloyd being carried about on a throne when he was Governor of Bombay, and saw in him a reactionary imperialist unlikely to sympathize with the Egypytian point of view or to know how to deal with an advanced and aspiring Eastern people who already enjoyed a theoretical independence granted to them by a unilateral declaration from the British Government. With my arrival in Egypt the stage was set for an acute crisis in Anglo-Egyptian relations, and, though I had no inkling of it at the time, in my own life

and political development. Lord Lloyd had made an ominous speech just before leaving England in which he had spoken with significant emphasis of "my predecessor Lord Cromer." His predecessor, Lord Cromer, had governed Egypt as a benevolent dictator, and nearly twenty years had elapsed since his retirement, twenty years filled up with a growing nationalist movement, the Great War, President Wilson's principles for a new world and the great turmoil of the unsettled peace of the early twenties. The Egyptian nationalists had pricked their ears when they heard the tendentious reference, but I welcomed it as heralding a return to the policy and methods of a great proconsul in the old tradition.

I spent only a few days in Egypt in the company of Mr. Reed and my old schoolfellows. Mr. Reed had not changed during the three years of my absence. Friendly towards the Egyptians and interested in their welfare, he was worried about the future of Egypt, he had no faith in the Egyptian democratic experiment; he still thought Egyptian nationalism was little more than a demagogic agitation. On all these points we were in agreement. We talked about Oxford and history and Burke, and then I left for the Sudan, convinced that the only things I loved in Egypt were my old school and school friends who formed an enclave of refinement and goodwill in an alien land of insincere shouting and pushing, dirty gallabiyas and sweaty tarbooshes swarming aggressively on the station platforms, and a general coarseness of thought and feeling noticeable everywhere.

I was very happy when the train reached Asswan and I transferred to a Sudan Government Nile steamer. There I found the order and cleanliness and organization and quiet unostentatious refinement I remembered so well from seven years before; the tidy clean cabins, the shining brass knobs, the well-scrubbed decks and, dominating the whole picture, the Sudanese waiters, in impeccable white caftans, green belts and red slippers, moving and wheeling with incomparable grace. I had been in love with these steamers in my childhood, and I was so glad to come back to them after the flies and dust and general disorder of Egypt. This was British civilization again, the tidiness and cleanliness and cultured comfort which the British had brought with them into the East. The Nile steamer at Asswan was a friendly outpost and symbol of the British Administration in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

The steamer paddled away from Asswan, and for two days I sat on the deck and watched the lazily unfolding scene of the winding banks—a slow-motion picture of little variety but fascinating in its languid monotony. First, you pass a colony of primeval dusky rocks on which a fierce sun, never veiled, has poured incessantly for millions of years since the dawn when their parent lava solidified into these forbidding shapes. They lie half submerged, hugging or leaning against each

other in riotous clusters, as though they had fallen from the sky in giant handfuls, and piled up into these monstrous groupings to rest there till the end of time, balancing each other at incredible angles. But soon the austerity of the bare rock is followed by the soft pleasantness of a narrow strip of green vegetation inserted between the water's edge and the ridge of stone and sand above; the sand is of a deep orange colour and falls in flowing folds as smooth and flawless as crêpe-de-chine towards the river-bank, and the green of the vegetation is all the more joyous for being a mere fringe on the edge of the desert, a brave and persistent emerald ribbon bordering the folds of orange silk. Occasionally a muddy bank, rich in alluvial soil, interrupts the ridge of sand and stone, or stretches out below it, and the thin green ribbon is replaced by serried battalions of palm trees that seem to block the river ahead of you until you get there and find it is only a bend through which the stream is flowing large and free. The boat paddles along, the trees come to an end, the sand reappears and so the film unrolls, black rocks, orange sand, emerald ribbon, palm trees winding and stretching in indolent, endless repetition, against a sky of burning blue.

It is a lovely picture, seen from the boat, but the life of the people cooped up on that precarious ridge of life, hovering on a bare foothold between the water's edge and the steep-rising wall of sand and stone, is a hard and terrible life. The orange sand that looks so beautiful to the traveller, to them is an unanswering and cruel waste. My mind flew back to the green fields of England and the terraced vineyards of the Lebanon and I felt bewildered before the appalling lottery of birth which decides the geographical distribution of mankind. Yet in spite of the inhospitableness of their shore, these people, I knew, were passionately attached to it. The cooks and waiters in the best houses and hotels of Egypt come from this Berberine country. They spend years in the soft luxury of Cairo and Alexandria, but most of them, when they have saved up a little money, go back to that sun-baked ridge, build a house among the rocks and live in it for the rest of their days. Their national boast is that their country is a land of prosperity, stretching from the river to the mountain—very often a matter of only twenty yards!

CHAPTER XXVIII

KHARTOUM AGAIN

AFTER its long crawling journey across the desert the train at last went over the Blue Nile bridge, and I was again in Khartoum. The town had not changed much. When I had left it even distinguished people still rode bicycles and donkeys, and the very distinguished drove about in dogcarts. In my absence Mr. Ford had made extensive incursions with his old T model, and these were now careering about the town on the newly-asphalted roads. Apart from this I could see little difference.

I went to live with my aunt, or as my uncle more correctly put it, on their back verandah. They had no spare room, but as I was anxious to live cheaply, I accepted their offer to sleep on the back verandah and share the dressing-room with my uncle.

The school year at the Gordon College was not due to begin for another few days, so on the day after my arrival I took tram and ferry and went to pay a visit to Omdurman. Here again there was little change in the town as a whole. The vast crowded mass of featureless mud houses, separated by passageways almost completely bare of landmarks, looked to me much the same as before, except for an occasional and abrupt modern bungalow recently built by some aspiring Sudanese Government official. But for me personally there was a big and cruel change. The wand of the magician progress had passed over the home of my childhood and obliterated it. My father's mud hospital, and the house in which we had lived during those four vivid years of the war, had gone, and in their place stood a magnificent modern hospital of brick and stone. I walked round this new temple, trying to discover the site, to recapture the bearings of our vanished house, but in vain.

I visited the market-place, where my father had many friends among the Sudanese merchants. They welcomed me with affectionate enthusiasm. They had not forgotten their old friend Selim, his resounding step, his loud laugh, his perambulations round the town on his white donkey, his prescriptions, his downright methods of treatment, how he used to scold them for disobeying his orders, and for not bringing the sick to him until they were on the threshold of eternity. Good old Selim, he used to say: "When a sick man is still within the doctor's reach you say 'leave him to God'; but when God has really got him you bring him to the doctor." They had not forgotten me either. They reminded me of my childhood, of things I had said and done. Alas, for those days. Things had changed, life was not so pleasant or careless now. The market was not so good,

worries had increased. But they were very glad I had come to work in the Sudan, and keep alive my father's name. They were glad I was going to be at the College, teaching their sons.

Two days later I went to the College to begin teaching their sons. I liked the youngsters, and I liked teaching them, but I did not like the Gordon College. I had my first shock immediately on entering it, for I discovered that there were not one staff, but two, a British staff of Tutors, and a Syrian-and-Sudanese staff of Teachers. I was, of course, attached to the latter. The British Tutors had each an office to himself; the non-British staff were all herded together in one large common room. The British Tutors, apart from teaching, were House-masters and looked after the human side of School life; the non-British staff were mere instructors, who walked into the class-rooms, gave their lessons, walked out again and had nothing more to do with the boys till it was time to walk into the class-rooms again the following morning. And lastly, the British Tutors were called " Mr.", and the non-British staff were called " Effendi," roughly the equivalent of " Mr." in the Near East, but more particularly the Turkish designation for a Government official. After seven years at Victoria College and Oxford, I was flung back at one bound into a world of group barriers, a world in which an obnoxious fence was erected between East and West, and in which I, despite my long and passionate struggle to assimilate England and be assimilated by her, was consigned to that side of the fence on which I was born.

I had imagined that the British Tutors, recent arrivals from Oxford and Cambridge, would be friendly to me; I had looked forward to making friends with them. My Oxford interests were still very much alive, and I had hoped that in my British colleagues, young graduates like myself, I should find companions with whom to pursue those interests. It was now January, and with the exception of those few days I had spent with Mr. Lias in Damascus, I had not, since I left Oxford in August, had any intellectual company, and I was very eager to be again with people who had my background and shared my interests, people with whom I could talk about books and art, people who knew English history and poetry, people who would understand allusions and recognize a witty quotation, people who could savour a well-turned phrase or give you one.

My expectations were disappointed. The British Tutors did not show any desire to know me. They nodded with a polite smile when we met in the corridors, and once during a football match which we were all watching, one of them spoke to me a few words, asking me what College I had been at, but for four or five months that was all the human intercourse I had with them. Towards the end of the school year they did invite me to dinner once at their mess, but by that time it was clear to me that the kind of friendship I wanted and had hoped

to find among them was out of the question. Indeed I never got to know them well enough to discover whether there were any among them whom I liked sufficiently to cultivate as friends, nor for the same reason could their indifference to me have been due to any personal dislike.

Not only, however, was there no personal contact between us, but the side of the fence on which they dwelt had a lofty and forbidding character. The people on it did not merely dwell apart. They dwelt apart in the manner of a superior species. The British Tutors were two grades above me in the Government hierarchy. They were Senior officials; I, a Junior official, although we had left the University and joined the Government in the same year. At the College they enjoyed the prestige of rulers. Not the dignity of schoolmasters but the aura of sovereignty surrounded their every step. They exercised a kind of military authority, and the discipline they enforced savoured strongly of the barracks.

This was why I disliked the Gordon College the moment I walked into it. It was a military, not a human institution. It was a Government School in a country where the Government was an alien colonial government. The Tutors were members of the Political Service. They were there in the dual capacity of masters and rulers, and the second capacity overshadowed the first. The pupils were expected to show them not the ordinary respect owed by pupils to their teachers, but the submissiveness demanded of a subject. At a normal school, at Victoria College, where the masters and pupils do not stand in any political relation to one another, even the worst master can only be a personal tyrant. He stands as an individual, face to face with his pupils, one human being against others, and if he tyrannizes over them it is in virtue of some compelling power resident in himself. He does not derive prestige from the apparatus of the State; he has no imperial forces ranged up behind him. The boys know that outside the school he has no jurisdiction; the moment they are out of the school they are free from his authority. Their fathers can meet him on equal, perhaps superior terms. But at the Gordon College, as I knew it in those days, the boys saw behind every British master the embattled forces of the Government. Even if the master was individually kind and human, there stood behind him, in the eyes of his pupils, the Director of Education, the Civil Secretary, the Governor-General, the Union Jack, and the power of the British Government. Behind him there also stood the District Commissioner who ruled their village homes. The master himself, indeed, would one day be a District Commissioner and rule over them and their fathers.

The fence of which I have spoken was not confined to the Gordon College. Before I had been long in Khartoum I realized that it cut right across the town, running more or less parallel with the river and

two or three streets away from it. On one side of it lived the British officials, on the other everybody else, and social communications between the two were almost non-existent. You did not cross from side to side except on rare occasions and by special invitation. Even those who lived on the other side of the barrier—the Syrians, Greeks, Armenians and Egyptians (the Sudanese lived mostly in Omdurman), were socially organized into communities self-contained and distinctly separate from one another behind invisible frontiers. The atmosphere of a small and young town like Khartoum enhanced the tribal instinct. The town had never had a homogeneous population, a character and culture of its own so that it could assimilate newcomers as individuals, take them into its foundry and cast them out stamped with its imprint. It had no maternal bosom into which it could absorb adopted children and where old identities could be effaced in the warmth of a new fellowship. When the foreigners had come twenty-six years before, there was no Khartoum. The native population lived in Omdurman, and in any case there could be no question of a backward people with very little culture of its own, absorbing and transforming newcomers on a much higher level of civilization. Khartoum had been created by the British and other foreigners, and they, coming with no common culture and finding no ancient mother ready to adopt them into an existing family, had settled down from the beginning into separate communities. Each community had its club and its committee for managing its internal affairs. Each community kept more or less to itself, spoke its language, observed its customs, and once a year gave a ball at its club to which the other communities were invited. It was as if slices of the parent countries had been transferred to Africa. In some individual cases the boundaries were occasionally crossed, as international frontiers are when tourists with passports and tickets go on a holiday to visit foreign lands.

This was the Khartoum to which I had come back. This had also been the Khartoum I left seven years before, but as a boy who had grown up within the frontiers of the Syrian community I had not noticed or minded these barriers before.

Back in this absurd miniature continent, and living with my aunt and uncle who formed a natural part of the Syrian community I found myself living in the Syrian tribe and belonging solely to it. I found several good friends among my countrymen, but I resented having to belong to the tribe. Cultured, Westernized individuals like myself were superior persons, were my peers, but the tribe was inferior; the tribe was a part of the East, and deep down in me the shame of the East still burned fiercely. I had run away from that shame seven years before. I had striven with all my might to free myself from that disagreeable affiliation resulting from the accidents of blood and geography. I had sought and won a new affiliation of the spirit, but

here I was again after those seven years of devout initiation, back in the grip of the tribe, as if I had never gone away, as if the whole struggle had been in vain.

I was powerless and I was deeply mortified. The new affiliation was not recognized by the tribe I had for so long tried to belong to. At Victoria College and Oxford I had succeeded. Mr. Lias, Mr. Reed, my Oxford friends regarded me as one of them. I was one of them. I shared their inmost feelings as Englishmen. But here things were different. I was regarded by the British community as a foreigner. Its doors were closed to me. Nor did any individual Englishmen outside the community boundaries show me any friendliness.

Mortification was not slow in turning into resentment. The domain from which I was excluded began to arouse my hostility. The dwellers in that land began to assume in my eyes the aspect of forbidding and arrogant strangers; their sumptuous houses and spacious gardens, the character of feudal castles housing an alien and haughty aristocracy. The manifestations of British privilege and British prestige began to gall me, and for the first time I began to experience towards the British Empire the hostile feelings of a subject who resents its rule and its might, because he has no share in them. What I had taken a personal pride in till then was becoming now the enemy of my pride, and I began to rebel against the glory I could not be associated with.

CHAPTER XXIX

MASTER AND PUPILS

IN my work I found a great and compensating interest. I liked my pupils and felt that they liked me. They were mostly friendly, smiling boys, tidy and pleasant to look at in their white gallabiyas and turbans. Sons of cultivators and government officials and artizans and tribal chiefs, they came mostly from backward homes but were tremendously keen and very anxious to learn. Their backwardness in English and general knowledge was more than counterbalanced by their freshness and spontaneity, their enthusiasm and earnestness. These boys, whose fathers and grandfathers had till thirty years before lived their own traditional lives completely unaffected by foreign ideas, using the sailing boats and water-wheels of Pharaonic times, were now receiving a quasi-English education and rapidly coming under the influence of Western thought and the example of other and more advanced Eastern countries. Apart from books and teachers there was the Egyptian Press, coming in twice a week, daily political papers, and illustrated weekly magazines—news from all parts of the world, especially Eastern countries, the latest developments of the political situation in Egypt; Gandhi imprisoned or released; Mustapha Kemal doing this and Ibn Saoud that; fiery patriotic articles, denunciations of Western greed and predatory imperialist designs; chronicles of sport events, biographical notes on film stars; a story from Guy de Maupassant, a critique of Nietzsche, a commentary on Bernard Shaw; descriptions of the latest mechanical wonders and reports of the latest speed records; articles on democracy and socialism, the League of Nations and disarmament—and running through all this, one main theme—the awakening of the East, the unfolding nationalist aspirations of Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Arabia, India, China.

The Sudan had already had its first unfortunate experience of nationalist eruption. Under the impetus of the Egyptian movement in its first revolutionary stage, a number of Sudanese of the first educated generation organized an agitation aiming at independence in union with Egypt. The agitation, which was confined to a section of the nascent intelligentsia, itself a very small minority, led to an outbreak of disorder in some of the towns and a mutiny in some units of the army. The Government struck swiftly and decisively. The organization was broken up, the leaders severely punished, and Egyptian influence removed from the Sudan for several years. The whole thing had been an immature and misguided ebullition.

This had happened in 1924, and when I arrived in 1926 the country

was quiet, and the educated class somewhat subdued. In the minds of my pupils, however, the ferment of budding thoughts and new emotions was going on. The narrow walls of their traditional prison-house had been perforated with a few holes sufficiently wide to let them see the outside world, and hear its mighty rumblings. The more imaginative of them responded vigorously to the stimulus. Their reaction was a complex of conflicting emotions. Wonder and an awed admiration of this outside world with its immense wealth and power, knowledge and skill and speed; thrills of excitement at coming into contact with it, though ever so slightly, at beginning to form a part, though as yet a remote and passive one, of this living, progressing colossus; contempt and pity for themselves and their country for being so backward and poor and ignorant; a collective feeling of smallness and inferiority, provoking in many cases a strongly assertive individual attitude and an inordinate self-conceit derived from the acquisition of Western education.

Among these various elements one was dominant: mortification that this modern world into the outskirts of which they were being admitted, should be entirely dominated by the West, and that one of the principal manifestations of Western power should be the subjection of the East. But the East was beginning to stir, and they were a part of the East. Emphasizing their Arab descent, and excluding from their consciousness their association with Africa and its negroes, they found great consolation in these facts. They were sharing in the renascence of the Arab East, but as this renascence had not much to show yet, they sought comfort and encouragement in the past greatness of the Arabs. What if the Christian Europeans were now the masters of the world? Had there not been a time when the warlike Arabs, fired by the spirit of their Prophet and the zeal of their new faith, swept victoriously through Christendom, carrying the Crescent beyond the Pyrenees and as far as the Bosphorous? Had not the Arabs been the masters and teachers of the world when the now mighty Europeans were steeped in mediaeval night? Had they not translated Aristotle into Arabic and transmitted to the European barbarians the first gleams of the light of Greece? But the greatest consolation of all, the one beyond doubt and dispute, the safe and sure anchorage of their being was the knowledge that in their Book and Prophet they possessed the Ultimate Truth. In this serene knowledge they felt superior to all outsiders even if God for some inscrutable reason had given some of these material powers of a somewhat remarkable kind. Truly that knowledge was a rock of comfort, and as long as it was not undermined by the burrowings of the imps of doubt they could lean on it and face the world. But in some cases the imps were already at work.

It did not take me long to see that the reactions of my pupils were very analogous to that psychological attitude I had known so intimately

in Syria as a child. The exaggerated glorification of the Arabs by the Sudanese was the exact counterpart of the Syrian Christians' hero-worship of the West while they were under Turkish suzerainty. The consolation which they derived from the feeling of kinship, through community of religion, with the European nations, the Mohammedan Sudanese, governed by Western Christians, sought and found in their relationship with the Arabs of the past.

A true son of Victoria College and a faithful disciple of Mr. Reed, I had come to the Gordon College determined to have intimate personal relations with my pupils, to practise all the ideals of teaching and human intercourse which I had acquired during my own education, and the state of things I found there added fresh incentive to my resolve. The military atmosphere sharpened my determination to be human; the aloofness of the British masters made me want to be nearer to the Sudanese. For by treating my Sudanese pupils as I believed pupils should be treated I was conscious of a moral superiority which buttressed my self-respect. I liked to think that by getting nearer to the minds of my pupils, by gaining their confidence and affection, by making them feel that I was their friend as well as their teacher, I could exercise over them an influence far deeper and subtler in its ultimate results than the authority of the British tutors for all its outward power. It was my compensation for the official inferiority of the position in which I had been placed.

The most promising of my pupils, the one whose subsequent career was to be the most remarkable, as it turned out to be the most ghastly in its final failure and tragedy, was a slight, pleasant-looking boy of eighteen in the final year, called Moawiya Nur. He attracted my attention from the first day by quoting from Shaw and Anatole France. I thought he was trying to show off a little superficial knowledge, but to my surprise I found when I probed him that the knowledge was deep and that behind it lay a shrewd and critical understanding. Moawiya came of an old and noted Arab family. His grandfather had achieved distinction under the Mahdi's rule, and one of his uncles was a judge under the Sudan Government. Being one of the most promising boys of his generation at the College, Moawiya had been selected by the College authorities for a medical career and given a scholarship to the recently established Kitchener School of Medicine for which the best talent was being recruited. Moawiya's own inclinations were strongly literary, and although a medical career offered him the best prospects a Sudanese could look forward to in Government service, he had no wish to become a doctor. Almost alone among the boys of his generation he did not regard education as the door to government employment. He desired education for its own sake, and he wished to study literature. But there was no university in the Sudan, and no literary course which he could take after leaving the Gordon College.

The choice before him was to become a clerk on leaving the College or to accept the scholarship offered him and study medicine. He might have become a teacher, but the College authorities did not think he would make a good schoolmaster. So it had to be medicine. His people naturally thought him mad to demur to the splendid chance offered him of free medical training and a secure and lucrative government career. Such a phenomenon had never been known in the Sudan before. It was something in the nature of a biological mutation. But the mutation had occurred in an unfavourable environment, and much against his will Moawiya consented at least to try the school of medicine.

But already Moawiya's heart was elsewhere. The literature that had cast its spell over his mind was English literature, and his heart had gone to the West. Moawiya was the first Sudanese to make real contact with the spirit of the West. In English literature, this North African Arab boy, who had never crossed the frontiers of the Sudan, who lived in a household where the women could not read or write even Arabic, found his spiritual home. His case was similar to my own but more unusual, more extreme. The differences between his spiritual home and his native soil, between the country, family and tradition to which he belonged and the remote and invisible world to which he was reaching out with all the eagerness and intimacy of a new passion, were far sharper and deeper than they had been in my case. He was a Moslem boy, a black boy. He was not only an Arab, but also an African, and his country had never known any culture but a narrow and stunted form of Islamic tradition. To have a picture of the contrast, to visualize the gulf he was stepping across, imagine him in the bosom of his family at Omdurman, surrounded by his mother and aunts, sisters and cousins, segregated women who had never looked on a stranger, illiterate women whose minds encompassed nothing beyond the elementary facts of biological and domestic life-birth, circumcision, marriage, pregnancy, divorces, death, mourning, cooking, personal adornment—imagine him in this setting reading Jane Austen or Aldous Huxley, moving about in polished 18th century English drawing-rooms, breathing the atmosphere of 20th century Bloomsbury.

I felt a deep sympathy for him which he sensed and repaid with the trust and admiration of a young enthusiast eager and grateful for guidance. He and I had met in this great country of English literature, to which we had come separately, travelling from different parts of the earth. I had been there for some time, but he was a raw newcomer, and the climate was utterly different from that of his native land. I had been able to acclimatize myself. I could go on living here indefinitely in great comfort and happiness, and if I had to go back to my homeland I could live there too, though perhaps at a little lower

level of vitality. But this complete stranger, inhaling this new air so passionately, how would he get on?

A few months after he had joined the School of Medicine Moawiya came to see me one day. In the course of our talk he asked several questions about universities abroad, what qualifications one had to have to be admitted to them, what the fees were like and so on. A week later I heard that he had left the School of Medicine and absconded to Egypt. His family were profoundly shocked and also alarmed. Egypt in those days was politically taboo in the eyes of the Sudan Government. A student running away to it in quest of higher education might be easily mistaken for a political renegade. Moreover, by leaving the School of Medicine and seeking education abroad Moawiya would forfeit his claim on the Government for subsequent employment. His uncle therefore appeared before the Director of Education, denounced his nephew's ungrateful madness and undertook to proceed immediately to Egypt and bring back the young fool by force if necessary. The Director promised to keep Moawiya's place for him at the School of Medicine until the uncle came back, and the latter left for Egypt. In Cairo he appealed to the Ministry of the Interior. He explained that he had come to reclaim a runaway nephew who was under age. The Government lent its support. The necessary orders were issued and Moawiya was arrested, kept at a police station for the night and handed over the next day to his uncle, who pushed him into the return train and brought him back to Khartoum. But Moawiya had made up his mind and bluntly declared that he would neither go back to the Medical School nor become a Government clerk. He wanted to go to a university and study English literature. His uncle, who was a friend of mine and knew that I took a special interest in the boy and had some influence over him, decided that I should arbitrate on the matter. Uncle and nephew came along and a solemn conference was held in my room to decide Moawiya's fate. Moawiya said that he wished to go to the American University of Beyrouth, and that his family had the means to send him there. The uncle admitted the means but objected that by going to Beyrouth Moawiya would lose his career and all guarantee of government employment. Moawiya said he did not want any guarantees and would be able to earn his living somehow or other when he had taken his degree. The uncle turned to me for judgement. I felt that I was reliving my own experience of four years before in the person of Moawiya. I knew what he was feeling for I had felt that yearning and known that strife myself. I could see the dream in his eyes, the look fixed on the distant horizon. The uncle, a decent fellow, neither hard-hearted nor narrow-minded, but merely practical, merely sensible, thought in relative values, balanced one advantage against another, considered consequences, employment, career, livelihood. But for Moawiya, passion-possessed,

there was nothing to be considered, there was only one absolute value, one end which must be sought for its own sake regardless of all consequences—the education of his mind, the development of his personality along the lines of its choice. He wanted to realize himself before worrying how he was going to feed and clothe and house that self. I pronounced in his favour and a few weeks later he left for Beyrouth.

CHAPTER XXX

AN ARAB NATIONALIST

AS the months went by my resentment against the British, fed every day by some new experience, deepened and widened into a settled alienation. I developed an unnatural sensitiveness which made me react with disproportionate intensity to little incidents, and see racial slights where probably no such were intended. The division of the world in which I lived into rulers and subjects burned steadily into my soul. The imposition of one human will on another arose before me as the cardinal fact of life, and gradually obsessed me to the exclusion of almost everything else. In this world in which, according to race, some people exercised, and others obeyed, authority, I belonged to the latter group. I was chained to it by the chains of blood and birth, chains which my passage through Victoria College and Oxford had, like some temporary magic, obliterated to touch and sight, but which I could now see and feel again. Steadily the fire burned, steadily but for some time quietly, for no major wind had risen to blow it into a violent blaze. But at last the wind came.

The wind came in the person of the Governor-General. One day His Excellency came to visit the College. The British staff lined up to receive him and were one by one introduced to him. The non-British staff were required to remain in their Common Room; there was no part in the ceremony for them. We sat in our Common Room, like a poor relation banished to the kitchen during the presence in the house of a distinguished guest. We sat in the Common Room and waited while His Excellency, attended by the Warden and British Tutors, sat on the lawn and witnessed a display of gymnastics. The distinguished guest then shook hands again with the members of the family and departed, and the poor relation was allowed to come out of the kitchen.

I walked home disgusted and enraged by this humiliation, thinking of other lands and happier days and cursing my fate that had brought me to the Sudan. That afternoon I gave vent to my feelings in a ten-page letter to Mr. Reed. It was the bitter outpouring of a heart brimming with disillusionment; a manifesto of revolt. I traced in it the history of my attachment to England and the English, dwelt with the sorrowful bitterness of disapppointed love on the memories of the past, and confided to him that this early passion of my life, this disinterested ideal attachment to England, formed in my childhood, strengthened by my education, made living through my friendship with him and other lovable Englishmen, had been blasted by the

experience of a few short months in the Sudan, and was rapidly, as is the way of wounded love, turning to hatred—hatred of British haughtiness, hatred of imperialism and empire, hatred of that greatness and power that was born of empire, of the Union Jack (alas for the days of Beyrouth and the Italian bombardment!) the arrogant size of the red-marked spaces in atlases and the poetry of Mr. Rudyard Kipling.

A devastating revulsion of feeling! No more the glories of British dominion for me; these glories did not belong to me; the manifestations of that dominion served only to humiliate me. I was on the side of the subject races, and the nationalist yearnings of the East arose before me with a new and overwhelming appeal. Philosophic conservatism, reason with its stately troop of cold and cogent arguments, the realist's mistrust of theories, the tendency to scoff at popular movements, the wisdom of the ages and the belief in the beneficent mission of the British Empire—all the pillars of my political philosophy —shivered and crashed into the abyss of abandoned things. The edifice which they had supported appeared to me now, for the first time, to have been an unreal structure, an intellectual sham, an academic replica of British Toryism, adopted and adhered to in uncritical imitation, and not a real creed fed by all that is living in the heart. Suddenly two forces had collided in me: the abstract force of a theoretical static mental attitude, and the volcanic force of an emotional torrent springing from the deepest recesses of personal experience. The torrent had begun in little trickling streams, here and there, that passed, almost imperceptibly at first, across my mind, coming from different quarters and joining up their forces gradually until, on that crucial day of the Governor-General's visit, they had finally merged into one rushing flood that smashed up and drowned the last remaining resistances. Even the great Burke, at least the Burke of the French Revolution, went hurtling down from his throne, and Tom Paine, friend of mankind, took his place.

Thus I was liberated, not by an intellectual process, but by the force of an emotional reaction, originating in my own wounded feelings, from the shackles of a political outlook which had been implanted in me by all the influences of my early life. Immediately new sympathies sprang up within me. Such words as "freedom," "equality," "independence," which I had previously looked upon with mistrust as the claptrap of demagogues, took on a new and vivid meaning in my mind, echoed in it charged with the reality of personal feeling. I found myself understanding and sympathizing with that host of longings, half-defined as yet, passionate and largely confused but none the less real, which come under the designation of "the Arab awakening." My whole life went into reverse gear. I became myself an Arab nationalist. My sympathy went out to the Indians and the Egyptians, to the Egyptian revolution on which I had looked dis-

approvingly seven years before, walking beside Mr. Reed in the streets of Alexandria among the tarbooshed crowds. A gulf had yawned then between me and those crowds. Now, transported as though by magic, I was on their side, at home among the tarbooshes, feeling as they felt, understanding at last why they hated England. I could not hate England as they did, because to me England was much more than the imperial ruler of the East, because she had other aspects, unknown to them, which I still loved. But I could understand now why they hated British rule, and why not knowing England in any other capacity than that of ruler, they hated her and her people with a consuming and undiscriminating hate.

A few days after the Governor-General's visit I went to the Syrian Club, which I had joined some months before but frequented little till then. I went with a purpose, with a new feeling. I wanted to assert my identity as a Syrian.

In a corner of the club garden enclosed by a low hedge, there sat in those days, regularly night after night, a certain Dr. Malhamé, one of the characters of Khartoum, whom I had met once or twice at my uncle Samuel's house. He had come to the Sudan many years before as a government doctor, but had resigned after a few years, mainly from resentment at the way he was treated by his British superiors, and had set up as a private practitioner in Khartoum. His culture was French, but he had revolted against all European ascendancy in the East and was just as anti-French as he was anti-British. With him in that corner sat Emile, one of the five Kfouri brothers, another rebel against England and the West, though like me he was a devoted son of Victoria College and a great personal friend of Mr. Reed's. Emile had come to the Sudan two years before me, and though he was in his father's business and was quite independent of the Government he had gone through the same psychological experience I had had, and reached the same state of mind. In me it was still new, in him it had become chronic. He and the doctor were bosom friends, united by many ties both of the spirit and the body. Together they defied the West and ostentatiously paraded their Syrian nationalism. Together they savoured in Gargantuan feasts the delicacies of Syrian cooking. Together they worshipped at the shrine of Anatole France, the great scoffer who helped them to prick the bubble of European vanity.

I joined their company, and for months the three of us met almost every evening in the doctor's little private enclosure. We ran down the West and extolled the East. We decided that we had been taken in by the specious lure of European civilization. Freed from its spell, we could now see its vices, and we saw them large and looming—the vulgarity of it, the greed, the false values of mechanical and military power. "*Mon ami*," the doctor would say in his polished French,

and replete with the exquisite productions of a cuisine that was already famous for its refinement in the time of the Crusades, "*Je vous fais observer que ces Européens ne sont que des parvenus dans la civilization* . . . mere upstarts of a few short centuries. Their minds have achieved great things, but the barbarian in their souls has not been tamed yet. They are predatory. They love domination and war and destruction. They have conquered the world but they have failed to conquer the greed and ferocity of their own nature. They have a great heritage of literature and philosophy and art, but the values that govern their lives are still the crude values of power . . . *Ils sont grossiers, mon ami.*" Or he would expand in a lyrical vein on the charm and simplicity of life in the Lebanon, and on the homely virtues of its villagers: "*Ils sont bons, mon ami* . . . they are kindly and hospitable, at peace with themselves, and with life . . . No, my friend, the soul of the East is not a myth. Behind its apparent ignorance and backwardness, this East of ours has in the very stuff of its being something greater than all the discoveries and achievements of the West, a deeper intuition of reality, a more ancient experience of life, a maturity of understanding beyond knowledge, an acceptance of life more triumphant than any conquest."

In my heart of hearts I knew that most of this talk was nonsense; twisted, romantic self-compensation. Was not that the old false contrast between East and West which I had always rejected? Wasn't it exactly the same thing as the exaggerated glorification of the Arabs in which my pupils at the Gordon College indulged by way of avenging themselves on the all-powerful Europeans? Was it not just as false as the hero-worship of the Western nations which I had known in my childhood in Syria? What reliance could be placed on appreciations and conclusions that were in all cases the obvious product of a governing emotional state? Was it not only a question of love and hate, both in the last analysis irrational, both blind? And lastly, weren't we, I and the doctor and Emile, whatever we pretended to ourselves, Europeans at heart, detribalized individuals whose place was in the European tradition and could not be anywhere else? The Doctor himself knew this too. One day I revolted against his exaggerations. "*Mais, oui, mon ami,*" he said, "I know that I exaggerate, but we have for so long erred on the other side, in blindly admiring and imitating everything Western and despising our own heritage, that it is natural and even desirable that we should swing over now to the opposite extreme for a little while. Of course we belong to the European tradition, but we must find our own place in it, as free men with a local heritage of their own, and with an independence of judgement and choice. Our former attitude was the result of excessive love; our present of a reaction of hate. But you are wrong, my friend, if you believe that love and hate are entirely blind. They are

only one-eyed, and each with its one eye sees one side of the truth. When we loved the Europeans we could not see their faults, but we saw their virtues very well. It is good that we hate them now because only thus can we see their vices. You see, my friend, your emotion is only partly the enemy of truth. It is also its friend."

One evening we were sitting at the club, Emile, the doctor and I, talking about an incident which had recently caused some excitement in Egypt. A number of Egyptian aviators, who had been training in England, were to have flown back to Egypt on completing their course the week before. This was to have been the first flight by Egyptian airmen from Britain to Egypt, and there had naturally been much enthusiasm about it among the Egyptian public. Everything had been prepared for the flight, and the full blast of Press publicity turned on it, when suddenly it was announced that the whole thing had been cancelled because the British Government refused to grant the necessary permission. The Egyptians were very angry, and everybody was asking and conjecturing why the British Government had prevented the flight. Naturally the general tendency was to put an uncharitable construction on the British action. The doctor shared this tendency to the full. He believed that the real reason was that the British Government, for selfish imperial ends, did not wish to encourage Egyptian aviation. We had finished with this incident and were talking about something else, when Albert Kfouri, the friend of my early days at school, walked in.

"*A propos*," he said casually, "the British Government have published a statement on the prevention of that Egyptian flight, which sounds quite reasonable. Apparently the fliers weren't sufficiently trained for a flight of this nature, and the British authorities feared that they might crash."

The doctor was speaking to someone else when Albert made this little speech, but had heard enough of it to make him prick up his ears. Finishing his remarks he turned on Albert with a sinister air of excessive innocence, like a battleship swinging into action disguised as a Red Cross vessel.

"*Pardon, Albert*," he said, in a voice of silken smoothness, "*Je n'ai pas bien entendu ce que vous avez dit . . . Voulez-vous repeter?*" and in the doctor's eye there was a look that matched his voice, a pretended innocence that masked something diabolical.

"I was only saying . . ."

"*Oui . . .?*" prompted the doctor, his voice still restrained but with a stern and menacing note creeping into it.

"That the British Government . . ."

"*Oui . . .* "

"Thought that perhaps . . ."

"*Oui . . .?*"

Albert was now in a panic. The "*Oui's*" were coming faster and faster, with a grim and rising insistence, each more menacing than the last, and the silken softness of the voice no longer concealed the sarcasm that lay behind it.

"Well," he blurted out, his back to the wall, "it's not unreasonable after all. Their training may have been inadequate."

Then the doctor erupted. The stream of lava could not be held back any longer. It poured out and engulfed the wretched Albert.

"*Alors, vous croyez, n'est-ce pas?* that the only concern of the British Government was to prevent these poor fliers from breaking their necks; that it was from pure tenderness of heart and paternal solicitude that it refused them permission to fly . . . That was precisely what you said, was it not? *En bien, mon ami* . . ." and so the lava flowed searing everything before it.

A few months before I should have been indignant with anyone who disputed the genuineness of the British statement quoted by Albert. But on that night at the club I agreed with the doctor in thinking Albert a fool.

Gandhi and Saad Zaghlul and Ibn Saoud became my heroes. Lord Lloyd, whose appointment as High Commissioner for Egypt I had welcomed only a year before, became almost my personal enemy symbolizing, with his arrogant airs and dictatorial methods, everything that I had come to hate in British rule. I was delighted the day Arthur Henderson (then Foreign Secretary) dismissed him from his post. I rang up Emile and the doctor as soon as I had heard the news, and that evening there was quite a celebration at the club. A minor Bastille had fallen.

What I and Emile and the doctor felt and expressed in our little corner at the club, was felt in varying degrees by all the Syrians in the Sudan, and in a different way by the Christian Syrians in the Lebanon itself. Since the War a reaction had set in among these erstwhile hero-worshippers of Europe. Direct contact with their heroes had destroyed many of their illusions. They had been hurt by the people they had loved from afar in the days of their oppression and welcomed as friends and protectors in the hour of their deliverance. Moreover, the record of Anglo-French diplomacy during the War and immediately after it—the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Balfour Declaration, the decisions of the San Remo Conference—had shocked even the most loyal among them, and the disillusion had steadily deepened as a result of personal contact and direct experience of Western Mandatory rule. The legend of centuries had been dissipated in a few short years.

When the Moslem Arab felt himself betrayed or insulted by the British whom he had trusted and admired, his reaction was simple and wholehearted. He hated and revolted. He sought, with an undivided mind, freedom and independence. He fanatically opposed his

religion and language and culture to the civilization of the West. It was different with the Lebanese Christians. Their peculiar position and cultural make-up made such a clear-cut reaction impossible. Spiritually, they stood half-way between the Arab world and Europe. Arabs by language, and to a certain extent by race, they had with Europe the strong bonds of religion and of the moral values and social institutions that derive from religion. Those of them that acquired a Western education found themselves more at home in Western culture and among Europeans than they could be in the Arab tradition or among unwesternized Arabs. Politically, their chief desire in the past had been to achieve security from Moslem persecution, a security which they believed they could only win with the help, and retain under the protection, of the European Powers. They had won this security in 1918 and their main concern now was to preserve it. No matter how disappointed they might be in European mandatory control, how bitterly they might resent the policies of the British and the French in Syria and Palestine or the personal attitude to them of individual Englishmen and Frenchmen, they could not revolt in the mass as wholeheartedly and positively as the Moslems. They had no pure indigenous nationalism to oppose to the West. Arab nationalism was in their eyes still a largely Islamic emotion and movement in which they could not participate fully and unreservedly. Complete Arab independence, involving the elimination of all Western connections, was not a consummation for which they could yet genuinely strive. An independent Arab world would be a Moslem-dominated world in which the Christian communities would be again in the position of defenceless minorities. Only in the Lebanon did the Christians form a majority, but it was a small majority in a country surrounded by predominantly Moslem populations, so that even here the Christians did not desire an independence completely freed from European influence and ultimate sanctions.

Hence the reaction of the Christian communities in Syria, Palestine and even the Lebanon to Western domination was mixed and half-hearted. That there was a nationalist reaction, a new spirit of self-assertion, national pride and psychological independence of the West, quite unlike anything that had existed before the War, was evident. Among many people too, particularly of the younger generation, there was a nascent loyalty to a national ideal transcending religious divisions. Young Christians and Moslems, educated together in a secular tradition at the American University of Beyrouth, were working together and forming parties to promote a non-denominational national consciousness and strive for independence through unity. I met a number of young Christian men and women who belonged to this movement and were enthusiastic about it. Unlike the generation before them, they cultivated Arabic as their principal language and

proudly asserted their place in the Arab tradition. A general reaction from the previous tendency to admire and imitate everything European was beginning to declare itself in a confident reaffirmation of native customs and native standards in various little ways. For some decades before the War a large section of the Syrian Christians had almost entirely ceased to give their children Arabic names. European names were thought to be more refined and there was an invasion of them. In our family I was the only child of four to be given a European name, but I knew whole families of Edouards and Georges and Alberts and Alfreds and Evelyns and Violets and Roses. Many people who had been born before this fashion set in, and been given Arabic names of which there existed a European version, followed the fashion when it came and adopted the latter. Yusef became Joseph; Jirji or Jurjus, George; Tanios, Antoine. Now, there was a conscious reaction to this practice and parents were again giving their children Arabic names with a new pleasure in their beauty and pride in the independence which they proclaimed. Before the War European and American songs were very much in vogue among the educated class in the Lebanon, and there were very few modern Arabic songs. A few years after the War a Lebanese satirical poet appeared and swept the country with a number of witty and charming songs in the colloquial language, expressing genuine indigenous sentiment and delicately satirizing social and political vices. Old and young, rural folk and smart townees, Moslems and Christians and Druses, all found in them something that touched a common chord in their hearts. They became immensely popular and largely ousted the songs of the West despite the pervading influence of the Cinema. Until 1914 the leading doctors in the Lebanon and Syria had been Europeans and Americans, professors at the American and Jesuit universities, members of the Missionary Societies. There was a large number of native doctors, of course, but none of them had attained the highest peaks, at least not in the estimation of the public. In my childhood we always had English doctors in our family, and the names that reigned in the kingdom of healing and spelled hope to sufferers even in the remotest villages of the Mountain were the legendary names of Graham and Post and Debran. After the War things began to change rapidly, and within a few years native doctors and surgeons had risen to the top in every branch of medicine and won the complete confidence of their compatriots. A similar change was noticeable in the educational field, though here the existence of long-established well-endowed foreign institutions which largely satisfied the country's needs did not leave much opportunity for native enterprise. Such native schools, however, as came into being, and the attitude of the public towards them, showed the same new spirit of self-confidence and moral independence of the West. A striking example of this trend was a new High School for girls started

by a Christian Lebanese woman who had herself been trained by the British Mission in Beyrouth and for many years before the War taught in their schools. When the War came and the British, American and French schools closed down, she opened a small school herself to enable some of the pupils she knew to continue their education. There was nothing very significant in this action, nor in the success achieved by this school during the War, when it supplied an urgent need and had practically no competition to contend with. What was significant, however, was that even when the War ended and the European schools reopened, the Ahliya (National) School, as it had come to be called, continued to enjoy the support of the public and became one of the leading high schools for girls in Beyrouth. Many families who before the War would have sent their daughters to European schools even if a native school had existed then, now sent them to the Ahliya with a new feeling of pride in something that belonged to them. And the girls that came out of this school, Christian, Moslem and Druse girls—my sister was one of them—were attached to each other and to the school and its headmistress in a way that reminded me of Victoria College. In this attachment one could see the beginnings of a loyalty transcending religious differences and forming the basis of a national consciousness and culture.

But in spite of all this, there were still real differences and fears that made a complete national integration between Moslems and Christians, for the time being, impossible, and which in the deepest layers of consciousness made the Christian Arab feel that he did not and could not yet belong wholeheartedly either to the Arab cultural tradition or to Political Arab nationalism.

Of this truth I was fully conscious even in the most violent moments of my revolt against England and the West.

CHAPTER XXXI

A NEW JOB

SEVERAL months passed without bringing any change into my life or feelings. I was unhappy and regretted having come to the Sudan. I tried to find work in Egypt or Syria. I appealed to Mr. Reed to give me a job at Victoria College, but this he could not do because, according to the constitution of the school, the resident staff had to be English, and outside the cadre of the resident staff there was no post that offered any career or that could even maintain me and a wife. My contract with the Education Department had still another year to run, so I decided to wait at least until it expired, and meanwhile pursue my search for work outside the Sudan. I had been in the country for a whole year and had not yet made friends with a single Englishman.

Then one day a new prospect opened up. My uncle Samuel, my mother's brother, who had come to the Sudan soon after the battle of Omdurman and served the Sudan Government for over thirty-two years, was about to retire and the Government were looking for someone to understudy and eventually succeed him. By official designation he was Intelligence Officer, but his duties were rather those of what to-day would be known as a public relations officer. He was a sort of intermediary-general between the Government and the Sudanese people; his principal duties were to interpret native thought and feeling to the Government and explain Government policy to the public, particularly the religious and tribal leaders and the new and small class of urban intelligentsia. He knew the country and its people better than any other man living, and was extremely popular with the Sudanese who trusted and resorted to him in all matters big and small. His position in the Government too was one of high status and responsibility. He had been in the service longer than any other senior official and had become a sort of venerable institution crowned with immemorial prestige, a law unto himself. I was not a little flattered therefore when one day he called me into his office, explained to me the position and suggested recommending me for the succession. He admitted that he had some misgivings about my suitability for the work. He had the notion that I was too academically-minded, interested only in books and abstract ideas, while his job was a severely practical and political one involving delicate contact with all sorts of people and demanding tact, suppleness and an all-round capacity for accommodation and compromise. He was, however, willing to give me the chance if I was keen to take it. He would recommend me for

a trial as his understudy. The transfer from the Education Department could be effected at once, and as he was not retiring for three or four years I should have a good opportunity of learning the work and forming the necessary contacts with the public under his guidance. He warned me, however, that if I did not prove a success I must be prepared to leave and find another job. If, on the other hand, I proved suitable, a permanent post offering an attractive career would be mine.

There was much in the offer to tempt me: first, the chance of an immediate escape from my position at the Gordon College which, despite my liking for teaching and for my pupils, I had come to hate because of its inferior status and the whole character of the College. If I succeeded my uncle I should become a senior official and have an important job. Even as his assistant and understudy I should have an individual status of my own, I should have an office of my own and not be herded with twenty colleagues into a common room set aside for non-British staff. Above all I should no longer feel that I was a mere menial carrying out decisions in which I had no share. Secondly, I should have an assured career with good prospects and be able to marry in a not too distant future. Against these inducements, however, stood out the fact that by accepting this offer I should be resigning myself to living in the Sudan permanently, in that social environment of Khartoum which I had found so disagreeable and from which I had felt so anxious to escape. More than a year, however, had passed since my arrival in Khartoum, and though I still disliked the general social character of the place and resented the aloofness of the British, I had begun to find ample compensation in my individual friendships with Syrians and others of my own tastes and outlook, and could look forward to a sufficiently agreeable life as a free-lance, independent of all communities and able, if necessary, to dispense entirely with British society.

But this was not the only consideration that seemed at first to detract from the attractiveness of the offer. Another and equally important one was the fact that if I accepted it I should definitely commit myself to permanent and active association with British rule in the Sudan, that rule against which I had experienced such a violent emotional revolt only a few months before. Yet, in the very character of that revolt there was something which secretly prompted me to desire my uncle's post. My revolt against the British Empire had sprung from wounded feelings, not from any intellectual conviction that British rule was a bad thing. In the Sudan, at least, it was obvious that there was no satisfactory alternative to British rule for the time being, and that there would be none for a good many years to come; it was obvious, however one might hate the spectacle of an arrogant foreign dominion, that British rule was, on balance, doing the country much good and that the Sudanese were not by a long way yet ready for anything like

independence. My desire to see the East freed from British rule could not therefore apply to the Sudan except as a remote aspiration. Egypt and India were advanced countries with organized active nationalist movements. The Sudan was still very backward—scarcely a nation yet. The vast majority of the people, still in the tribal stage, were illiterate and had no political consciousness whatever. Security and justice and a modicum of economic prosperity were all that they asked of life, and British rule was giving them these things. They were contented and accepted, without resentment, the Englishman as a paternal ruler. And the Englishman liked them and got on well with them. Between him and them no emotional problems existed; they lived on different planes. Comparisons were out of the question. No psychological challenge, no inferiority complex could develop under this relationship. It was different, however, with the small class of educated Sudanese, town intelligentsia, government officials, mainly the product of government schools, the only class in the country created by the British and, ironically, the only class that was beginning to resent British rule. Between this class and the British there was little contact outside official relations, no understanding and not much sympathy. The educated Sudanese, as a class, were unhappy. Their minds were being warped, their souls soured, and I knew the reasons, I knew them as no Englishman could know them, because they were in kind, if not in degree, the very things that had embittered me. In my experience and in my own feelings I had the answer to the question which the British were beginning, with pained and naïve surprise, to ask themselves, "Why don't the educated Sudanese like us?" and I felt that I should like to be in a position to give that answer, to interpret the feelings of the Sudanese intelligentsia to the Government. I felt that if I could show the British how they wounded the feelings of the educated class, they might change their behaviour and so rid themselves of that one bad quality in their rule and social dealings with their subjects which offset all the good ones, which had so embittered me and was beginning to poison their relations with the new Sudanese generation.

For all these reasons it did not take me long to make up my mind. I said good-bye to the Gordon College, and turned away from teaching to begin a political career.

My anticipations had not been wrong. I sensed a difference for the better immediately in my new job. Here the world was not divided into a British tribe and a non-British tribe. There was the Head of the Department, an Englishman, and a few other Englishmen; some in senior, others in junior positions. There was my uncle, in a very senior position, and myself, the latest addition. There was no fence dividing us according to nationality. I had my office, and I was called "Mr. Atiyah." I was immediately conscious of the fact that

my individuality was recognized. Although I was my uncle's assistant I had direct dealings with the Head of the Department, J. C. Penney, from the first day, and I liked him at once. There was no trace of racial arrogance in him. He had real abilities and a forceful and attractive personality. He did not have to buttress up a deficient individual character with ramparts of artificial prestige, to conceal intrinsically inferior mental qualities beneath the aura of his official position, to invoke in any way his status as an Englishman in order to secure respect which he could not win as a man—as indeed so many Englishmen do, or give the impression of doing, when dealing with non-Englishmen in the East. Easterners feel, or used to feel, that most British officials in the East live spiritually on elevated thrones, little Eiffel towers erected in their own minds, from which they nod and speak to the people around them in the belief that if they never come down to the ground at all the people will never discover their mortal frailty. Penney did not live on any such throne. He never sat on one for a moment. He lived permanently on the ground, and he walked about among the crowd confidently, easily, cheerfully, sure that he could keep his position as a man among men without pretending that he was anything more. He was the first Englishman I met in the Sudan who reminded me of Mr. Lias and Mr. Reed and the human relationships I had known at Victoria College. From the first moment I felt that he was prepared to treat me according to my individual worth, that my not being an Englishman did not matter to him in the least, that he accepted me as an equal socially and mentally, and that he respected both my feelings and opinions. My reactions were immediate. The personal bitterness of the past two years began to wear off, and I felt that a new phase in my life was beginning.

Encouraged and stimulated by the change I went to my new work with enthusiasm. For weeks I read books and files and reports; I had long talks with my uncle on the past and the present. We discussed the policy of the Government, the attitude of the British, the feelings and aspirations of the Sudanese. I went about among the Sudanese reviving old friendships and making new acquaintances. I listened and studied and thought.

CHAPTER XXXII

MARRIAGE

WHEN several months passed and my career in the new job seemed fairly secure Jean and I decided to get married the following summer, and early in 1928 I left for England. I crossed the Mediterranean round whose shores the first civilizations had flowered and withered long before the little island in the North Sea had been heard of. I had not been to England for three years. I was going back to it leaving the British Empire behind me for a few months. The England that lay before me was the old England of my affections, not the England of the British Empire; a country, a human reality, not a political system. When I arrived I felt friendly towards the people. They were the friendly, kindly decent people I had known before. They were real and human. I did not feel that I was a stranger among them; I did not feel that I was inferior, or superior to them; I did not feel fanatical or self-assertive. I remembered what hundreds of people had said, that the English were lovable in their country but detestable in their Empire. It was true and easy to understand. In their country the English were a people, a whole human hierarchy stretching down from the King to the charwoman and the newspaper boy, including the mighty and the humble, those who exercised authority and those who obeyed it, existing as individuals side by side. The foreigner in England did not feel that he was a subject and that the British people were his rulers. He was an individual with rights and duties like any Englishman. He had to obey the law of the land and those who administered it, but he felt that the law and the policeman were there to serve him, and his relations to other Englishmen were determined by the normal scheme of life. If he was an undergraduate he called his tutor " Sir," while on the other hand his Scout called him " Sir." He did not have a fixed status *vis-à-vis* the entire English people conceived as an abstract person. He was not conscious of a collectivity, but of individuals, some of whom were superior to him while others were his equals or his inferiors. In this setting he could develop normal human relations with the people, and he found them essentially decent and humane. In the Empire, the British existed not as a people but as a ruling caste, not as individuals but as a political collectivity. There you could not meet them as human beings or even as specialized units in the social organism. Behind the individuality of Jones or Smith, behind the teacher and the doctor and the judge you felt the unpleasantness of the ultimate authority of race and nationality. And of course the ruling

caste itself living such an unnatural life deteriorated and lost many of the qualities that made the British at home an agreeable people.

But my attention was focussed on more personal matters on my return to England. One week after my arrival, and three years after I had left England, Jean and I got married. We had a long and varied honeymoon in North Wales, London, Paris, Florence, Rome and Naples, and then took a boat for Syria to visit my mother on our way back to Khartoum.

My mother had long since withdrawn her opposition to my marriage. With her consent we had become officially engaged the year before, and she had sent Jean a handsome present and exchanged letters with her. The consent, however, had been given on general grounds, and my poor mother had no guarantee but my assurances and her belief in my judgement that she would like this English daughter-in-law; and I knew that she was anxiously waiting for the moment when she would meet my wife and decide for herself whether I was saved or damned, whether she had lost her son, or gained a new daughter. Sure of the result I was impatient for the moment to come and set my mother's mind at peace. Jean too was nervous. If my mother had to face an English daughter-in-law she had never seen, Jean had to face all my people, my sister and uncles and aunts as well as my mother, a whole array of new relatives to whom she was a stranger, and she was coming to face them in my country and theirs, where we should be all at home except herself, the only stranger. For her it was a complete leap in the dark, except for the one ray of light provided by me. I was conscious of my responsibility, but I had no fears, and I was at peace with myself, filled with a great sense of difficulties surmounted and conflict resolved. On the boat approaching Syria I remembered the state of mind in which I had approached it three years before, coming back to the unfriendly East, to face the hostility of my parents to my proposed marriage, the challenge of my past to my future, homesick for England, uncertain of the future, afraid and aggressive and miserable, adrift without an anchorage between East and West. The dark uncertainties that had faced me then were now behind me. A friendly reception was awaiting me at home from a converted mother; I had found a new anchorage in the new outlook I had formed during those three years; the East was no longer unfriendly.

We arrived at last at our house in the mountains. As the car went through the village where I was born, many of the villagers recognized me and waved friendly greetings. The car stopped at the house. Somebody shouted to my mother and she came running out. I watched her and Jean. My mother short and dark, her face wrinkled, her small but vivid eyes trembling with excitement; Jean tall, robust, her pink cheeks flushed, her eyes also glowing tremulously. My mother was virtually running; Jean went forward to meet her. They

looked into each other's faces, smiling, excited friendly smiles, but behind my mother's smile there was a searching nervousness, an uncertain fear that had haunted her for three years and that had waited for that moment, in anxious abeyance, to be confirmed or dispelled for ever. My mother was famous for her intuitions about people. She either liked a person or did not at first sight. She knew that her future relations with me and to a large extent her future happiness would depend on the revelations of that first look at Jean. It must have been a terrible moment for her. But it did not last long. Her asking smile found the reassurance it was seeking. The nervous tension behind it relaxed instantly. Triumphantly I knew that all was well.

I had told my mother casually, years before, that Jean could not eat eggs. This had been a temporary idiosyncrasy of Jean's in her youth, and had passed. Both Jean and I had forgotten all about it. But my mother had not. " You can't imagine, Jean," she said pathetically, as we walked to the tea-table, " how difficult it is to make cakes without eggs. I've tried hard, but they just won't hold together, so please don't mind their appearance."

My first impression was confirmed as the days went by. Jean and my mother liked each other. My mother discovered to her great relief that Jean was unlike the much disliked Dora who had married her cousin twenty years before. Rapidly, too, Jean made a conquest of the whole family, and became very popular with all our friends. She used with great effect the few Arabic words she knew; she ate and relished all Syrian dishes; she quickly picked up local customs and entered with ease into the spirit of Syrian conventional courtesies. The news that " Edward's bride " was friendly and sociable spread rapidly in the village, and more people came to see us. It seemed to them that Jean was quite free from the unpleasant characteristics associated in their minds with the British race. And the highest compliment they could pay her was " Really, you are so nice that one can't believe you are English," to which Jean replied with a laugh that she was Scottish. " We knew it," they would say. " We knew you couldn't be English. The Scotch, of course, are different, aren't they? "

CHAPTER XXXIII

SUDANESE NATIONALISM

IT happened that my entering the political department of the Sudan Government came shortly after the 1924 subversive movement, in which some members of the first educated generation of Sudanese had taken a leading part. This unfortunate experience had shaken the Government's confidence in the educated Sudanese, aroused its apprehensions about the political results of education in general, and caused it to pause somewhat in its forward liberal policy of the preceding period, if not to shrink definitely back. Moreover, the Government had in 1922 decided to make an experiment in Native Administration or Indirect Rule by reviving and recognizing the authority of tribal sheikhs. This policy was in full swing when I joined the political department, and it not unnaturally seemed to the educated Sudanese a reactionary policy, reaching back to the past instead of striking out into the future, and seeking to ensure the Government's position by basing it on an alliance with the forces of tribalism and ignorance which could be relied upon to give it support against the new educated and politically conscious minority. It was a difficult and delicate period in the history of the Sudan. The educated class, although still very small and consisting mainly of Government officials, was obviously going to play an important part in the future development of the country. Through its knowledge of English and its contact with the outside world this class had acquired certain abstract political ideas as well as the habit of thinking politically about all concrete internal matters. It had already developed a nationalist outlook. Its numbers, its influence, its political consciousness were bound to grow. Its relations with the Government were bound to acquire increasing importance in the general scheme of things.

If a gulf was allowed to exist and widen between this class and the Government all possibility of a healthy political evolution would be shut out. It was imperative that a rapprochement be effected, but the problem was no easy one. Not only had the educated Sudanese given the Government a violent political shock by their action in 1924, but strong personal antipathies existed generally between them and the British officials. The majority of the educated Sudanese were still very immature. Many of them suffered from the arrogant conceit of adolescence. They were in the awkward no man's land between their own indigenous culture, from which in many ways they were beginning to depart, and the new culture of the West which they were beginning to copy but were unable yet to assimilate, and they bore all the marks

of this transitional condition, mental and emotional instability, superficial imitativeness, confusion of standards and that combination of inward lack of assurance and outward assertiveness which is born of the inferiority complex. In their heart of hearts they recognized the superiority of the Englishman and his culture, and wished to emulate him. But this recognition itself, coupled with the fact that the Englishman was in a position of authority over them, caused them to resent and deny that superiority. Having begun to learn the Englishman's language and to copy his culture and technique, they found themselves standing on common ground with him where comparisons were possible, and they began to make the challenging comparisons of adolescence. All this was inevitable and even healthy, the natural signs of psychological growth, the expressions of an experience which since the beginning of human time has been repeated with every generation, and which is inseparable from the impact of an advanced race with a mature civilization on a backward people. The average Englishman, however, like an old-fashioned parent, did not at first understand this sufficiently. He had little insight into the psychology of this new generation whom he himself had educated. Instead of realizing their difficulties and showing them the patience and sympathy which they needed to complete the bewildering journey on which they had started, he merely found them insolent and objectionable. He was impatient of their half-baked ideas, forgetting that he himself was the baker and that he had not yet given them enough time in the oven. He resented their exaggerated notions of their own ability and importance and tried to suppress rather than correct them. Having liked and got on well with the rustic fathers of this educated generation, he now extolled with exaggeration the simplicity, wisdom and natural dignity of the older men who had remained rooted in their native culture. True, the older men were in some ways more attractive than their half-educated sons, but this was not the only reason why the Englishman preferred them. Another important, if not equally conscious reason, was that they were more quiescent, more amenable to his will, less critical. Under the Khalifa's tyranny these men had learned to hide their real feelings and opinions and to agree smilingly with authority even when they detested it. They had learned to hold their tongues in order to preserve their heads, and the habit inculcated in that terrible school had not left them. So they smiled and agreed with the Englishman and said "Yes, Your Excellency" and "No, Your Excellency," according to what they thought "His Excellency" wanted to hear. The benevolent paternalism of the English naturally found this attitude more likeable than the challenging spirit of the educated young men, and many British officials were therefore inclined to turn away from the educated class and merely ignore it. They did not realize the danger of this attitude. These young men might be few

as yet, half-baked, ill-informed, yet they carried the seed and hope of the future. Their appearance was a significant political phenomenon. It meant that the days of paternal rule were numbered, and that a new policy and a new outlook on the part of the British administrators were necessary; and the British administrators who did not number quick adaptability among their many admirable qualities, found it difficult to make the change.

My chief, Penney, was different in this respect from all the British Officials I had met till then. Possessed naturally of quick perceptions and a supple mind, he had served for six years in the Egyptian police at Alexandria before coming to the Sudan, and this had given him a breadth of outlook and a power of adaptation and compromise which few of the British officials who had come to the Sudan straight from Oxford and Cambridge possessed. These officials, brought up on the authoritarian discipline of the Public Schools, and coming straight from the sheltered and superior atmosphere of the ancient universities found themselves, from the first day, occupying positions of authority in an even more sheltered and superior Political Service in a country in which there was no parliament, no press, no form of public criticism whatever. They gradually rose to positions of higher and higher authority without ever having to render account to anybody except their departmental chiefs, men of the same outlook and sheltered experience as themselves. Most of them naturally developed rigidity of mind and impatience of criticism.

I began to develop my theme in long talks with Penney, and in a series of notes which he read and passed to higher authorities. Drawing on my own personal experience as well as on the experience of many of my Sudanese friends personally communicated to me, I put before the Government a detailed analysis of the feelings, aspirations and resentments of the educated class. I advanced and went on reiterating the thesis that the revolt of the educated class in the Sudan, as well as in other Eastern countries, against the British was mainly emotional, mainly a revolt of wounded *amour propre*, aggravated by a burning inferiority-complex; that it was a revolt not against oppression, injustice or economic exploitation—of which in the Sudan at least there was practically no trace—but against spiritual arrogance, racial haughtiness, social aloofness and paternal authoritarianism; that it was a revolt of the man who is made to feel inferior, who is kept in an inferior position and compelled to respect and obey an alien authority in which he has no share. I argued that the educated Sudanese were in a position that rendered them peculiarly sensitive since most of them were in government service, occupying menial posts, in daily contact with the British officials and in permanent subjection to them; that they desired not to throw the British out, but to be taken into real partnership with them in the Government;

to share in the authority they were required to obey, in the responsibility for the policies they had to carry out, so that they should be able to feel the dignity and self-respect of men who were not merely the instruments of another's will. I urged a different personal attitude towards the educated Sudanese, the development of social intercourse and human relationships with them, the cultivation and pursuit of common cultural interests. On all these points Penney and I were in complete agreement. A great understanding developed between us, and we worked together, as junior and senior partner, in a happy and vigorous alliance.

Soon a dramatic occasion presented itself for a line-up of political opinions in the Government over a question involving all these issues. The Government had for some time been thinking of reducing the starting rates of Gordon College graduates entering the service as clerks and accountants, on the grounds that these rates had been fixed too high in the first instance, that they were out of proportion to the country's economic standards and too generous even when compared with the rates obtaining in more advanced and prosperous countries. There was much force in these arguments looked at in isolation and from the financial point of view alone. The Government's decision to make this cut was, however, taken in the early days of the 1931–2 financial crisis, and the starting rate was reduced from eight pounds a month to five and a half. Moreover, this happened before the Government had taken any anti-crisis measures affecting the salaries of the British officials. Sudanese opinion reacted immediately and violently. It saw in the Government's action the culmination of a policy it had long suspected the Government of pursuing against the educated class. It was shocked by the magnitude of the reduction and by the fact that the Government's first drastic economy should be at the expense of Sudanese prospects. If the Government had been thinking that Sudanese starting rates were too high, the educated Sudanese had, on their part, been critical of what seemed to them the high salaries and generous privileges of the British officials, and it was difficult for them to accept as objective and honest the Government's decision to reduce the former without touching the latter. A few days after the Government's decision was announced a mass meeting of Sudanese graduates of Government schools was held in Omdurman to consider the matter, and resulted in the election of a committee of ten delegates charged with the duty of making representations to the Government against the reduction in starting rates. The committee's first approach to the Government was unsuccessful. The Government maintained that the decision was justified and that it saw no reason to go back on it. The committee returned to the attack again and again, and public feeling behind it mounted higher and higher. The Gordon College students who, as prospective government officials, were directly affected by the

cut, went on strike, quietly but with a determination and solidarity which repeated appeals by their fathers and guardians, who exhorted them to return to their studies and leave their future in the hands of their elders, failed to break. The students, four hundred of them, had to be sent home and the College was temporarily closed. Eventually they were prevailed upon to return, but feelings continued to run high and the ten delegates persisted in their efforts to persuade the Government to cancel the cut or at least reduce it. It was clear that the Sudanese felt that they had a very real grievance, and that if the Government did nothing to redress it its relations with the educated class would be pretty thoroughly poisoned for quite some time, that it would lose their confidence and earn that bitter and enduring hostility which springs from an outraged sense of justice. The Government was divided. The Conservatives, the authoritarians, the doctrinaire upholders of the sovereign power and prestige of government, the exponents of the rigid and narrow view that if the Government does something which it thinks is right it should refuse to modify it in deference to public sentiment—in short, the George III's and the George Grenvilles, were against any modification of the original decision and there were some very powerful voices on their side. But against them a liberal opposition, inspired by considerations of expediency and practical wisdom, began to form. Seeing how deeply, how acutely the Sudanese were feeling about the matter, seeing that the public's sense of justice had been really shocked by the Government's decision, and that no argument on earth could reconcile it, many senior officials began to favour a concession regardless of whether the Government had been right to make the decision in the first place or not. Penney and I threw our weight on this side. My weight did not count directly at all in those days. I was still a young and new official, and I had no immediate access to those in whose hands the decision lay. But I could influence Penney, I could exert my weight through him, and he, as Chief of Public Security, could speak his advice into the highest ears. For me the situation was an almost exact reproduction of a chapter of history that I knew very well, the chapter about the British Parliament and the American Colonies. The stage was much smaller, the issues at stake much less important, but the elements of the situation were exactly the same, and the arguments I heard from the other side, the arguments against a concession, were those of George Grenville and George III. I was thrilled with excitement. This was history come to life; a practical laboratory demonstration of a great event I had studied in books. As a minor assistant in that laboratory I could play a part in the demonstration; I could answer the arguments of Grenville with the voice of Burke. The Grenvilles said the Government had been right to make this decision, the reduction was right in principle and fully justified. They said if the Government went back

on its decision because of public clamour, if it made any concession to popular sentiment it would be sacrificing principle on the altar of appeasement, and this, they said, would undermine the very foundations of authority. They said the Government must do what it believed to be right and adhere unswervingly to its course regardless of what the public felt about it. They said that any concession by the Government would be regarded as a surrender, and would call forth demands for further concessions.

I felt, with all the instinct of my being, that these arguments, in spite of all their apparent logic, in spite of the formal soundness of the principle on which they were based, were wrong, completely and disastrously wrong. The public had been profoundly shocked by the Government's decision, they fervently felt that that decision, if enforced in its entirety, would constitute a grave act of injustice towards a certain class of Sudanese. They demanded a modification. They believed that if the Government were reasonable and well-intentioned towards them it would take their feelings and views when expressed so strongly, but reasonably, into consideration, and make some concession. They had no intention of challenging the Government's authority, and the Government was strong enough to afford a magnanimous gesture. I felt sure that a concession would do immediate good without involving any ultimate harm. It was a case for political wisdom, not for abstract insistence on formal logic or sovereign rights. It was a case for Burke. I went to my bookshelf and took down my Burke. Why use his arguments in my words when his own words were there? I went through his American Speeches, marked the relevant passages, and gave the book to Penney. These were the passages I marked: "What will quiet these panic fears which we entertain of the hostile effect of a conciliatory conduct? Is it true that no case can exist, in which it is proper for the sovereign to accede to the desires of his discontented subjects? . . . Is all authority of course lost when it is not pushed to the extreme? Is it a certain maxim that the fewer causes of dissatisfaction are left by a government, the more the subject will be inclined to resist and rebel? . . . The question with me is not whether you have a right to render your people miserable; but whether it is not your interest to make them happy. It is not what a lawyer tells me I may do, but what humanity, reason, justice tell me I ought to do." Penney was impressed, and passed the book to others, higher in authority, and so Burke travelled through the Government offices, declaiming his ancient and universal wisdom on a new situation, throwing his mighty weight on the side of concession, while the debate that divided the Government mounted to its climax. Finally, the Governor-General came down on our side. He decided to restore a pound of the two-and-a-half by which the starting rate had been cut. He told the ten delegates that while the Government still thought that

their original decision was justified, he had decided to make a concession to Sudanese feeling as a gesture of goodwill. The effect was immediate. The concession was very well received and had a marked influence on the growth of friendly relations between the Government and the educated Sudanese.

We had won. I knew that Penney's advice had helped to influence the Governor-General's decision; and I had helped to strengthen Penney in the opinion which we shared from the beginning.

Our victory gave me a new interest in my work and a sense of personal significance which went a long way towards healing those early wounds my self-respect had received in the Sudan. Even if we had lost I should still have come out of the experience with that sense of personal significance, for the fundamental fact for me was not that we had won, but that I had been able to play an active part in the controversy, that I had been consulted by one of the principal protagonists, that my views, and Burke's, had been listened to and had made some impression. To this satisfaction, however, the victory of my side added the spicy stimulus of success and the exhilaration of hope. The doors of opportunity seemed to be open, and I saw myself walking through them, arm in arm with Penney, to greater achievements in the years ahead.

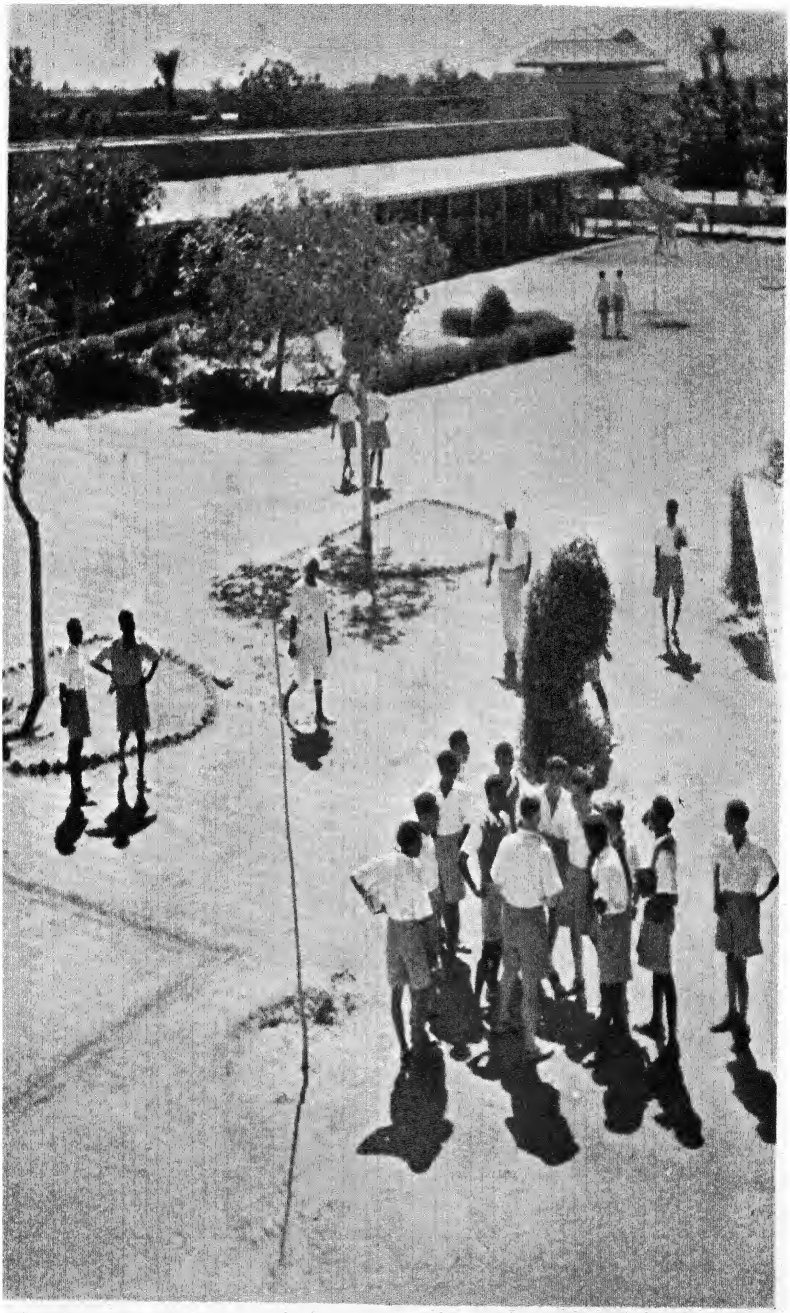
CHAPTER XXXIV

A COMPLEX RESOLVED

AS the months and years passed I gained more and more recognition and the sense of personal significance grew steadily within me. My uncle retired and I succeeded him to the full status and responsibilities of his post. I was interested and happy in my work, feeling it to be useful and important. I knew that my opinions counted with the Government and that I enjoyed the confidence of a large section of the educated Sudanese who trusted me to interpret their aspirations and grievances faithfully to the British. Gradually I came to know more and more of the British officials both in my own and other departments. At first I was still very much on the defensive with them, uncertain, in every new case, of their attitude towards me, afraid of being slighted. Politeness and courtesy alone did not satisfy me. What I wanted was to be accepted by them as an equal and treated as a friend, as Penney had accepted and was treating me. Gradually I discovered that others were willing to accord me the same recognition and treatment, and as I made the discovery and became sure of it my guardedness, that aggressive sensitiveness of a threatened dignity and the latent hostility which it keeps alive, dropped from me. I acquired assurance and began to dispense with assertiveness. I was no longer looking out for insults, no longer prone to interpret any word or gesture that I did not like as a calculated slight. Once I became assured of the fundamental fact that my British colleagues harboured no discriminatory feelings towards me on account of my race I was more than ready to make allowances and put the most, instead of the least, charitable construction on their actions.

Official contact on a footing of equality soon bred friendship. The invidious barrier of inequality having been removed I got to know my British colleagues intimately, as I had known my friends at Oxford, as I had known Mr. Reed and Mr. Lias at school, I got to know them as real living people, not as mere political abstractions or racial symbols, and knowing them so I got to like and admire many of them deeply. I found that many of them shared my views and were very sympathetic and liberally disposed towards the Sudanese. I found that many of them were already aware of, or at least quick and ready to understand, the objectionable traits in the British attitude towards Eastern peoples and particularly the educated classes in the countries under their rule.

Friendship at the office led to social intercourse and this in its turn bred wider friendships. Gradually, Jean and I came to know and



GORDON COLLEGE BOYS AND MASTERS IN THEIR WAR-TIME HOME IN OMDURMAN

make friends with many young Englishmen and English couples of our age. My first impression of the British in Khartoum as a haughty and self-isolated aristocracy faded away as I got to know them and mixed with them as an equal on their side of the fence. The fence itself seemed to dissolve. The territory which I had seen before stretching beyond it lost that alien forbidding look which observation from the other side had given it. I found myself walking up and down the land unimpeded by barriers. I found myself walking among friends as I had felt in England. People who only a short time before had seemed to me hostile and hateful abstractions, when I was looking at them across the frontier, now entered my life concretely as decent and friendly individuals. Transformed by the strange alchemy of the mind, they no longer symbolized to me the power and dominion of an arrogant empire. They became merely Tom and Jack and George. I liked them or I did not like them as individuals, but there was no more symbolical significance in them. They no longer walked in the shadow of Kipling, draped in a Union Jack, bestriding a world on which the sun never set. Their houses, even the big riverside mansions with the spacious gardens, were the homes of people I knew, familiar human habitations, not remote castles tenanted by Olympians. It seemed as though a revolution had occurred in my vision, yet my eyes were the same as before, and the objects they perceived were the same. The only difference was that a new emotion was active behind the eyes. A wounded feeling had been healed, and instead of inflaming toxins a soothing secretion was bathing the optic nerve of my mind.

The new light in which I saw individual Englishmen began to shed its glow on the abstraction of British rule behind them. My revolt against British rule had sprung from my resentment against individual Englishmen. I had rebelled against the arrogance of domination, and this arrogance I had experienced in the attitude and actions of a number of Englishmen. A few concrete instances had merged into an abstraction, and this abstraction, this idea of arrogant domination had loomed up, ugly and hateful, behind every deed and every manifestation of British rule. But now I was having a different experience of Englishmen. I was liking instead of hating them, and the more I liked them in the concrete, the more the abstraction behind them, the idea of British rule, changed its colour. British rule was what Tom and Jack and George did, what I discussed with them at the office in the morning, what we talked about together over drinks last night. There was nothing sinister about it. I saw it in the making; I had a share in it.

In this respect, however, the change though largely subjective was not entirely so. It corresponded to something in external reality. The facts around me were also changing. Sudanese nationalism had after the rash explosion of 1924 altered its methods and direction and

was now developing along healthier lines, while the policy of the Sudan Government and the personal attitude of the British officials towards the educated Sudanese, after a period of stagnation, if not reaction, which was at its peak when I first arrived in the country, were undergoing a marked and rapid change for the better.

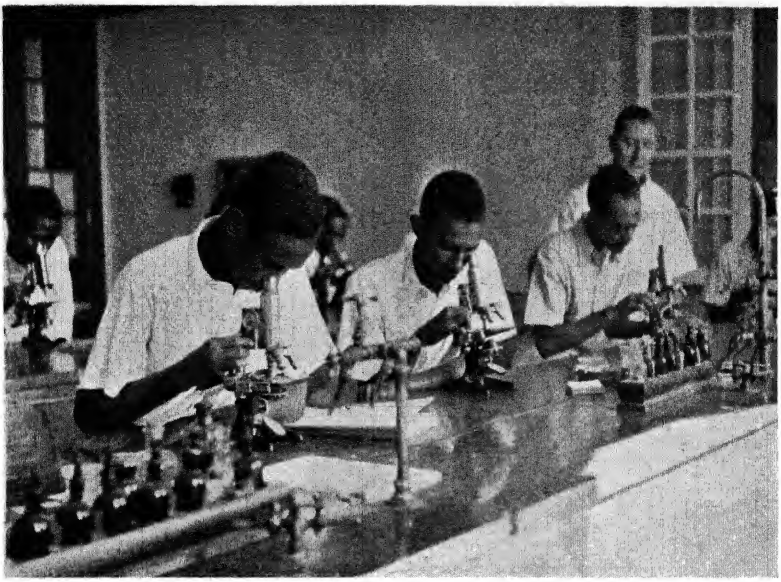
The 1924 outburst of Sudanese nationalism, the first immature effervescence of the nationalist emotion in the country, had been purely negative and violent. A small section of the still very small educated class had, under the stimulus of the Egyptian revolution, and identifying itself with that revolution, sought to expel the British and achieve independence for the Sudan as a part of Egypt by violent means. The failure of that movement and the disillusionment that followed it brought about a complete change of orientation and tactics among the Sudanese nationalists. Even during the actual crisis of 1924 the majority of Sudanese patriots had remained aloof from the movement, believing in a more indigenous form of nationalism than that which it represented, and wisely realizing that the country was neither ready for independence nor capable of realizing it by force, even in conjunction with Egypt. These moderates therefore naturally came to the front when the revolutionary movement failed, and were joined by several of the former leaders of the other school who, in the bitterness of their reaction, realized that they had been misguided and genuinely regretted what they had done. The new nationalism that was thus born out of the ashes of the first was purely Sudanese both in its inspiration and direction. It conceived of the Sudan as a distinct national entity and aimed at developing towards complete nationhood and automony by constitutional means under the guidance of the Sudan Government which represented both Britain and Egypt. Many of the Sudanese young men of the post 1924 period had become acquainted with the ideas of the progressive mandatory school of British imperial statesmen and thinkers, like Lord Lugard and Professor Julian Huxley, and been impressed by them. They realized that they needed training and guidance and believed that they could get these from British administrators and educators better than from anybody else. If the British would treat them in the true mandatory spirit, rather as wards and pupils than as subjects, training them for self-government and progressively taking them into active partnership in the administration and handing over to them the responsibilities of government as they became qualified to shoulder them, they were prepared to accept their position under the Sudan Government and co-operate with it towards this end.

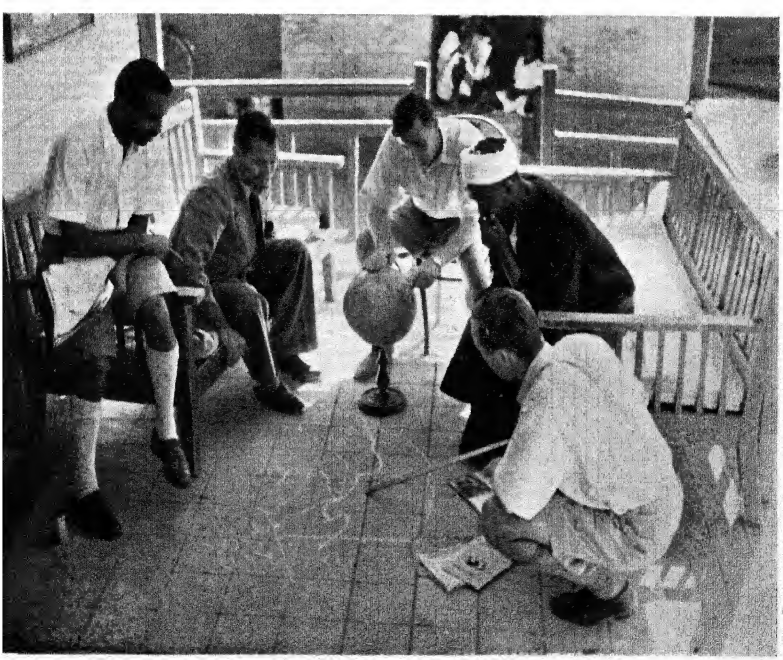
The Sudan Government, for its part, made it increasingly clear that this indeed was the rôle it conceived for itself. It accepted the slogan of the new nationalism, " the Sudan for the Sudanese," and professed self-government for the country as its ultimate aim, and the training of

the Sudanese for it as its immediate object. Thus, in principle, there was complete agreement between the Government and the nationalists over the criteria and aims of policy. In practice, of course, there were differences as to the efficacy of the Government's measures and the speed of its motion. Inevitably the nationalists thought that the Government was not going ahead fast enough with the implementation of its declared policy, that the steps it took to educate and prepare them for self-government, and to associate them progressively with itself in the administration of the country, were inadequate. While the Government thought that they were and that progress at a quicker pace would be dangerous. Regardless, however, of which side was right in this not unhealthy controversy it was obvious that the Government was in the main following a progressive policy as a result of which the Sudanese were receiving wider educational opportunities, a greater freedom of expression and a steadily increasing share of responsibility in the administration. An imaginative programme of educational development had been drawn up and adopted after the period of stagnation that followed 1924, providing for improvement and expansion at all levels and the creation, at the apex of the pyramid, of a University College to bring together all existing post-secondary schools (such as the Kitchener School of Medicine which had been founded in 1924, and the Law School founded some years later) as well as a number of new ones, including faculties of Arts and Science, into one whole that should gradually attain university status. As a part of this programme, the practice was started of sending Sudanese doctors and teachers on educational missions to England for special advanced studies. The character of the Gordon College itself had been transformed since my days. It was now a healthy educational institution where British and Sudanese staff (the Syrian masters had all left) shared offices and worked together in a spirit of enthusiastic co-operation as one team, and where there was real human contact between the British masters and the pupils. The Press censorship and general administrative control of all forms of public expression which had existed in my early days in the country had been gradually lifted, and a free public opinion was growing up and vigorously expressing itself through a number of newspapers which boldly voiced grievances and criticized the Government. In the administrative sphere the Sudanese were being given an increasingly greater share and more responsibility both at the centre and in local government. On the one hand, more and more Sudanese were being promoted to executive posts previously held by British or other foreign officials. On the other, a network of councils, some with executive powers, all over the country and ultimately crowned with a central advisory council in Khartoum, was transforming tribal Native Administration and indirect rule by autocratic chiefs into Local Government on a territorial and democratic basis, and

giving the Sudanese people an active share in the management of their own affairs and a chance to influence Government policy at the highest level.

It seemed to me that the logical and inevitable conclusion of this policy must be self-government sooner or later. The cynics, of course, said that this was the crux of the whole matter, that it would be definitely "later," always "later." But there were several factors in the circumstances of the Sudan that supported a more hopeful and charitable view. In the first place, there was no population of White settlers in the Sudan competing with the natives for the land and always anxious to keep them down in order to preserve its own economic privileges and social supremacy. With the exception of a few individual farms in one region (only one of which, incidentally, belonged to an Englishman) all the agricultural land in the country belonged to the people or the Government, and in the most important region no foreigner, British or otherwise, was allowed to acquire any part of it. Even in the towns the foreign population (traders, professional men, government servants) was very small. The British themselves came to the Sudan either as government servants or as members of a few commercial houses and banks. They never settled down in the country. They served their period, retired and went back to England. The total number of British officials in the Government was round about 800 and was bound to decrease as a result of the Government's Sudanization policy. From such a small and transient population no serious impediment could arise to the ultimate transference of government to the people of the country. Above all, with the exception of one big agricultural enterprise which was started as a partnership between the Government, the native tenants and a syndicate financed by British capitalists whose concession was due to expire in 1950, there was very little foreign capital invested in the Sudan, and therefore no secret pull or pressure by foreign financial interests such as are often exerted in colonial questions in a direction opposed to the interests of the native population and particularly to the handing over to them of the final sanctions of government. What then, in the last analysis, did the British get out of the Sudan which would make them loath to surrender its government eventually to its people? Economically, nothing apart from a living for several hundred British officials whose number was going to be progressively reduced, and the guaranteed but limited custom of the Government departments for British manufacturers and engineering firms. In the open market British imports did not enjoy any protection, nor did Britain exercise any monopoly control over the products of the country. Strategically, the Sudan was an important link in the imperial system of communications, but strategic safeguards for the British Empire in a world system of defence were not incompatible with full self-government in former





STUDENTS AT THE KITCHENER SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, KHARTOUM
GORDON COLLEGE GEOGRAPHY STAFF IN CONFERENCE

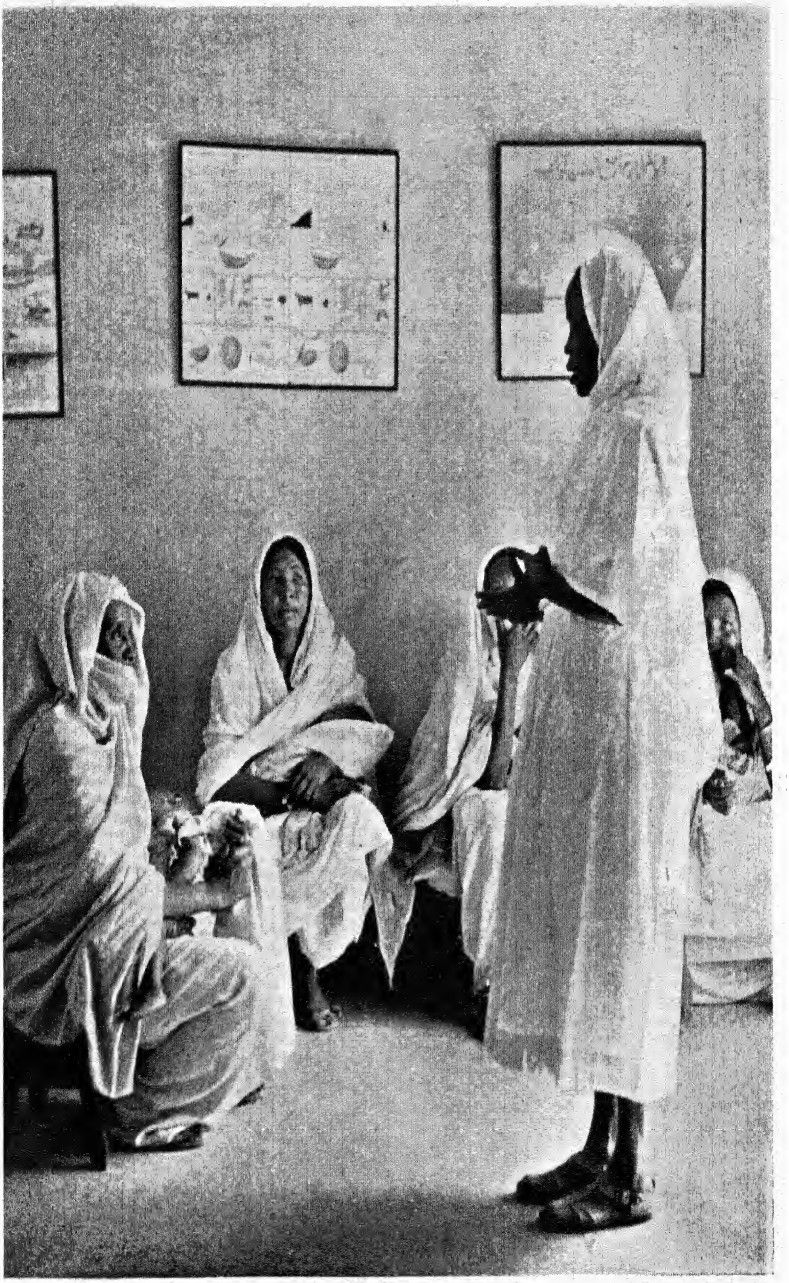
dependencies, and solutions on this basis had been found in several instances.

Reflecting on these considerations and convinced of the sincerity of many of my British colleagues and chiefs, I came to admire and believe in British rule in the Sudan, seeing in it a close approach to the genuine mandatory ideal. The British administrators themselves, taken as individuals and quite regardless of what ultimate British policy might be, were for the most part admirable men, honest, just, devoted to their work and having at heart the welfare of the people they served. They had established in the Sudan an administration whose integrity and freedom from corruption were unparalleled in the Near East.

Many of my Sudanese friends saw and admitted all this, but they still found much to resent in the personal attitude of the British towards them. They were still in the throes of the inferiority-complex from which I had been freed—very much on their dignity, quick to suspect a slight and liable, in such cases, to suffer devastating emotional reactions that blinded them to all rational considerations. Often they would come to me, boiling over with outraged feelings, men who usually were sane and fundamentally friendly to the Government. " Your friends are hopeless," they would say, " they will never get rid of their racial arrogance; there is no chance of our ever becoming friends with them. They say they are taking us into partnership, treating us as equals, but it's all words. At heart they remain rulers, fond of domination, resentful of our claims to equality in practice," and they would relate to me some incident or other in which they had felt humiliated by British behaviour. Sometimes their resentment would be justified, though rarely in proportion to their reaction. But often the behaviour complained of would be capable of several other interpretations than that of deliberate arrogance or contempt—shyness, an unfortunate manner or mere thoughtlessness. I would point all this out, quote to them my own experience and urge them to make allowances and not always jump to the worst conclusion. I would remind them that although there was little social mixing between them and the British yet, there was decidedly more than a few years previously, and impress on them that the aloofness of the British was not always due to snobbery but often to a natural reserve coupled with differences of social customs and cultural standards. Above all I would stress the fact that there was no colour bar at all in the Sudan. But it was difficult for them to combat these violent emotional reactions, and when they were under their influence they became oblivious to the advantages of British rule and doubted the sincerity of everything the Government did. In this mood they were destructively critical and impatient of British control.

Sometimes I wondered if my new admiration for British rule in the Sudan was objectively valid and not mainly the result of my new

emotional attitude to the British themselves. Was I now so convinced of its being a good thing, so favourable to it, merely because the British had accepted me as one of them, because my *amour propre* was satisfied and my personal allegiance enlisted? Or was it really as good as I thought it? The conclusion to which these heart searchings invariably brought me was that it was, in fact, a good thing, but that I could not have come to understand and appreciate it as I now did had not my emotional hostility to the British been eliminated and had I not come to know them as individuals, and to like and trust them. But who shall presume to assess the proportion of subjective motive to objective fact in a human judgement?



A SUDANESE NURSE TALKING TO MOTHERS AT A MATERNITY CLINIC IN OMDURMAN

CHAPTER XXXV

A DEFEAT AND A TRIUMPH

ALTHOUGH we now had many British friends and felt completely at home with them, we did not belong to the British community, and indeed had no desire to belong to it. We did not wish to belong to any community, and shut ourselves up in a narrow and monotonous national circle. We wished to be able to make friends everywhere and live a cosmopolitan life. And this we now did. We had many Syrian friends without belonging to the Syrian community, and we also had Egyptian, Greek and Armenian friends. Above all, we had a large circle of Sudanese friends, some of them elderly people who had been my father's friends, but most of them young men whom I had taught at the Gordon College or got to know subsequently through my work. They were all genial and hospitable and ready to return friendship with a warm and open heart. Jean took to them easily, and having mastered Sudanese Arabic and social customs and developed a taste for the national dish, Kisra and Mulah, became very popular with them. Their women did not sit with us when we went to their houses, but after dinner, while I and the men sat in the male quarter, she used to go in and visit them in the Harem and converse with them fluently on children and housekeeping and sewing and all other feminine matters.

It was a social life of great variety and sharp contrasts, and we enjoyed it immensely. It was our own creation. We had not found it in Khartoum, but had carved it out for ourselves, and we were very happy in it. There were no more any tensions in my life arising out of the clash of race or nationality.

My greatest friend among the Sudanese was still my old pupil Moawiya Nur. I had kept in close touch with him during his three years at the American University of Beyrouth, where he took his degree in English literature. We used to meet every summer either in Syria or in the Sudan, and I had followed with delight the fulfilment of his dream and the development of his powers from year to year. On graduating from Beyrouth he had gone to Egypt with the ambition of earning his living there as a free-lance literary journalist. Fired with the young intellectual's enthusiasm for the literary life in a great city, of which he had dreamed with so much longing in his home in Omdurman and as a medical student, against his will, in Khartoum, he had won through to his dream, he had smashed all the shackles that had threatened to chain him down—family opposition, Caesar's fiat, the insidious lure of government service, and now, at 21, a B.A. in literature from Beyrouth, the young Sudanese boy from Omdurman

was free to live the life of his choice in the great city of Cairo. The Bohemia of his imagination was waiting for him, with its attics and cafés, its Quartiers Latins peopled by Zolas and Johnsons and Dostoevskys, its glories of the mind and contempt for matter.

The fragile young Sudanese, very dark in complexion, with inspiration in his flashing eyes and mirth in his flashing teeth, his fierce idealism and burning literary passion, his prodigious reading and overflowing mind, was something new in Cairo literary circles. He attracted the attention of the distinguished Egyptian writer Abbas El Aqqad and was welcomed into his set. He became known and popular. His literary articles, applying European canons of criticisms to Arabic literature, rapidly gained him a name, and well-known writers came to value his opinions. For some time he was intensely happy; happy in his spiritual triumphs, and happy in the ascetic rigours of his material life. He lived in a small room on a roof in Heliopolis, amid little furniture but stacks of books and papers in the disorder proper to the artistic temperament. His meals were few and spare. Most days he lived on bread and cheese in his garret, and when sometimes he went to bed hungry, he got a thrill out of it. Had not Zola felt the pangs of hunger? He was living in the authentic tradition. The mind triumphed in the discomforts of the body.

But before long the flouted body began to take its revenge. His health suffered from lack of nourishment. The money he earned with his articles was not enough to feed him, and there were no prospects of improvement, since it was impossible in Egypt to earn a living in literary journalism alone. He was ill several times and on these occasions he spent lonely days confined to his attic on little nourishment and with nobody to care for him. Depression assailed him. Bohemia, seen from the windows of a lonely sickroom, lost its charm. He struggled on for a few more months, borrowing money from friends and extracting a little from his family, but in the end he yielded to the exhortations of his uncle to return to the Sudan and seek a job in government service. His objection to government service, now that he had achieved his ambition of completing his literary education, had lost much of its force. As a university man with a trained mind he might hope for an educational or administrative post in which he would have an opportunity of pursuing, if not his purely literary, at least his cultural and human interests, while the security and ample leisure of a government career would leave him enough time for writing.

With these hopes Moawiya returned to the Sudan and spent some months trying to get a government post. I saw a good deal of him during this period, and I was greatly impressed by the maturity and objectivity of his thought. He was a nationalist, but a new kind of nationalist in the Sudan, and very rare indeed in the whole of the Near East. He was a self-critical nationalist, a rational and constructive

nationalist who repudiated not only the blind emotional upsurge of hostility to the West, but also the abstract purposeless craving for independence as an end in itself. He believed, with all the intensity of his earnest nature, that the only justification for nationalism was the possession by a people of something worth expressing in itself and as a contribution to world civilization. He believed that independence was only the means to an end, and that if a worthy end did not exist in a healthy and creative nationalism, independence was not deserved, and if secured would be valueless. He wanted nationalism to start by being a movement of internal creation, of economic development, cultural progress and social reform, before it became a revolt against external control. For the British he had no hatred. For their good qualities and the good work they were doing in the Sudan, which he could see with an eye unclouded by passion, he had a great admiration, coupled with an objective and tolerant criticism of their faults. He was convinced that in her thought, culture and institutions, England had something valuable to impart to the East, and he was very anxious that the Sudan should acquire it.

Sitting in my office, where he visited me frequently in the mornings, he would discourse interminably on these matters, analysing Imperialism and Nationalism, quoting Lugard and Julian Huxley, and also laughing and flashing his teeth a good deal. For his earnestness and zeal were balanced by a great sense of humour, which never failed to reveal to him the ludicrous even in himself, and often, in the middle of a fervent exposition he would suddenly see his subject or himself in a comic aspect and burst out laughing.

He failed to get the kind of job he wanted. The Government found him alarming, and the Education Department turned him down as being unsuitable for a teaching career. His interview with the high official who passed the final sentence on him was somewhat unfortunate. Moawiya went to the interview wearing a loud yellow tie, which had a devastating effect on the staid bureaucrat. They talked about English literature and somehow got on to Johnson, about whom Moawiya knew a good deal and the distinguished civil servant apparently very little. Feeling called upon to say something, the high official thought he would play for safety and hide behind a cliché which he deemed to be non-committal. So he advanced the opinion that Johnson was born before his time. This statement shocked Moawiya as much as his yellow tie had shocked the high official, and the interview ended negatively. Later Moawiya was offered a small post in the Finance Department which neither agreed with his inclinations nor took account of his university qualifications. He refused it and returned once more to Egypt, disappointed and harbouring a grievance against the Sudan Government for having denied him the chance to live and earn a living in his country in a post that suited his bent and

attainments. Out of pique rather than conviction, and in order to earn the money which he needed desperately and which some Cairo newspapers were willing to pay for political anti-British copy, and not for literary matter, he wrote a number of articles satirizing the white man toiling under his burden on the pleasant lawns of Khartoum, with ice tinkling in his sundown refreshment.

Moawiys's return to Egypt was not only due to his failure to find a government job. A deeper reason was that he had become to a large extent a stranger in his own country, a lonely soul among his people and in his family. He, if not Johnson, was certainly born before his time. The gulf between his mental life and his native environment had become immense. He no longer had an anchorage in Sudanese life, and his tragedy was that he had failed to find a new anchorage elsewhere. Egyptian Bohemia was largely a pose and a phase. It offered him intellectual satisfaction and superficial excitement. But it had no soil into which he could strike new roots. In all the intimate things of life he felt a stranger in Egypt. He was a wanderer with no real home except in the imaginary world of Western literature. Only among the characters of Dostoevsky, Thomas Hardy, D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley could he live intimately and intensely.

There may, of course, have been other psychological processes of a more insidious nature at work in Moawiya's mind, but there is little doubt that this spiritual homelessness had much to do with his tragic end. One day, a few months after he had gone back to Egypt, I heard that he had had a nervous breakdown and was in the Cairo mental hospital. A few weeks later, having rallied slightly from the first shock of his disorder, he came back to the Sudan, for the last time, to live with his family in Omdurman and be looked after by those who in spite of intellectual disparities cared for him as nobody in Egypt could. It was the pathetic homecoming of an adventurous soul, returning in failure from a daring quest, maimed and frightened. For some time he was able to go about and superficially looked normal. He came to see me at my office as was his custom, and at first I could see no difference in his behaviour. I noticed, however, that he had a bulky book in his pocket and asked him what it was. His answer surprised me. The book was the Koran, and Moawiya explained that he was deriving great comfort from it and discovering in it meanings he had not understood before. He spoke with mysterious innuendoes as one to whom something of deep import was being revealed. This gave me a shock. I had had some previous experience of religious symptoms in cases of nervous breakdown, and immediately recognized the significance of Moawiya's speech and the way he said it. But a greater shock came a few moments later. The year was 1935, and Mussolini was rumbling at the British Empire. Moawiya, with a meaning look in his eyes asked me whether the British in the Sudan were not afraid,

and to my amazement went on to suggest, by means of the same mysterious innuendoes, that there was some secret connection between him, the Koran, Mussolini and the approaching doom of the British Empire. He threw out hints of occult powers, giving me to understand that there was more in the international crisis than met the eye, at least my eye, and that Mussolini was the instrument of a high purpose which somehow was associated with Moawiya's private desires. I looked speechless at the fragile pathetic figure sitting opposite me, marvelling at the fantastic resourcefulness of the human mind when defeated by reality. Moawiya's delusion was his answer to the might of the British Empire, his revenge on the British for their dominion over the Sudan, his retaliation against the Sudan Government for having denied him a job.

I did not see him for some time after this first meeting. He did not come again, and I heard that he was spending all his time at home and did not wish to see anyone. Then one day I had a message from him asking me to go and see him. I went and was staggered by the change that had come over him. He was in a comparatively lucid state when I saw him, and this indeed added poignancy to what I saw and heard. He knew that there was something wrong with his mind, and he was seeking a cure. He had put himself in the hands of a Fiki, a primitive, ignorant, half-religious and half-medical quack, who was treating him by means of charms and mysterious potions. Moawiya believed that this man could do him good. He believed in his powers, in his superstitions. He had reverted to his native dress, and this change in his appearance, which at a normal time, would have made no impression on me, now seemed the symbol of a deeper reversion. For behind those clothes a whole culture and a whole personality had disintegrated. Piece by piece, like Emperor Jones in the panic of his forest night, Moawiya's disordered mind had cast away all its cherished Western garments and fallen back into its primitive trembling nakedness. The Fiki did not cure him. He became completely insane and later died.

While Moawiya lay insane in Omdurman, in part at least the victim of the impact of the West on the East, that impact was leading another friend of mine, in different circumstances, to a consummation of glorious fulfilment. Amin Osman, Head Boy of the School and Captain of the 1st XI in my first year at Victoria College, had followed up these achievements with a distinguished career at Oxford and then entered the service of the Egyptian Government. A good Egyptian and a great admirer of those British values which had formed the basis of his education, Amin Osman's ambition had always been to bring into harmony the relations between Egypt and England, to achieve a political synthesis between the two countries similar to the cultural synthesis he had achieved in his own mind and life. He had always been grieved by the course Anglo-Egyptian relations had followed since 1919 when

he was still at school, by the bitterness and wastefulness of a conflict which seemed to him unnecessary. That the conflict could be resolved to the advantage of both countries and that it should be so resolved had been his earnest conviction since his earliest political days. I remember the emphasis and the resolution with which he used to proclaim this conviction at our discussions at Oxford and later in Cairo when he was still a very junior inspector in the Ministry of Finance. " We must have a treaty with England," he would announce decisively, in his firm crisp voice, bringing his fist down on the table in a gesture of vigorous finality, " We must have a treaty with England, and if ever I come to power it will be the first thing I shall do," and again the vigorous fist would bang the table, scattering doubts, cutting the Gordian knot of the Egyptian problem. His friends always knew that Amin Osman would go a long way, that he would reach the highest positions in the service of his country, but none of them could have foreseen how rapid his rise was going to be, nor how faithfully his undergraduate dream was going to come true. He went down from Oxford in 1923, and in 1936 he was Nahas Pasha's right-hand man in the negotiations that led to the conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of friendship and alliance. By the generous admission both of the Egyptian Prime Minister and the British negotiators, the success of the negotiations was in large measure due to Amin Osman's devotion to the cause of Anglo-Egyptian friendship and his indefatigable determination that that cause should triumph. He acted not only as the official interpreter at all the crucial meetings between the Egyptian Premier and the British Ambassador, but also as a psychological buffer, absorbing the shock of clashing views, and by tireless exertions helped to reconcile the two sides as only one with his background, education and sympathies could reconcile them. It is not therefore too much to say that the conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty was in some measure at least due to the influence of an English school and the inspiration of the men who had made it what it was. For it was at Victoria College and through his contact with two great Englishmen that Amin Osman had first learned that it was possible for Egyptians and Englishmen to be good friends, on a footing of equality, and pursue together the same human ideals in an atmosphere free from the poison of domination, on the one hand, and the hatred of emotional revolt, on the other.

CHAPTER XXXVI

AT HOME IN MY COUNTRY

MY past and my present, my first love for England and my subsequent revolt against her, my Syrian background and my English education, my old loyalty to the British Empire and my new loyalty to the cause of Arab nationalism, were now reconciled in a new synthesis of emotions and ideas. The basis of this synthesis was my belief that the British connection with the Arab world could be transformed from one of domination to one of friendship and positive association for the good of both. There were indeed many signs that it was being so transformed. The treaties with Iraq and Egypt were evidence of the process.

Anglo-Arab friendship was a cause that summed up and commanded all my previous conflicting loyalties, and I was very happy in the reconciliation of these loyalties. It was not merely an intellectual reconciliation, the acceptance of a compromise between opposing rational arguments. It was an emotional and spiritual reconciliation as well. Not only had two warring ideals made peace in my mind, but indeed two parts of me, both real and inescapable, had at last fused into harmony. For the first time in my life I felt that that part of me which was Syrian by origin and background and that part which was English by education and adoption were integrated, or at least could live side by side in me in peace and friendship. For the first time I accepted the Syrian part naturally and with an affection unpoisoned by any feeling of resentment or inferiority or shame. When a few years before, in my revolt against British domination, I had become an Arab nationalist and tried to re-identify myself with my Syrian background, I had done so aggressively, with the forced vehemence of a man finding a new love on the rebound from an old one. I had been driven into the new love by an exaggerated bitterness of disappointment with the old. But the old love was not dead, and the new one was therefore in part affected. It lacked the ease and assurance of complete sincerity. There was behind it the uncomfortable knowledge that it was the result of compulsion, not choice. It had a flavour of sour grapes. But now things were completely different. I had been accepted by the British as an equal. When I was with them, I was one of them, not an outsider. The old flaming feeling of inferiority had been quenched by this acceptance, absolutely and finally quenched, and with its quenching came a new feeling I had never known before, a spontaneous and unashamed acceptance of the other part of myself, the part which had been born in Syria, of Arab

parents, spoke Arabic and liked raw onions. The consciousness of having achieved complete equality and identification with the British had given me the confidence and freedom to accept that part of me which was not British, to accept it without an effort, not as a gesture of defiance but as an act of natural fulfilment. There had been merely a release on one side and an emergence on the other.

Going again to the Lebanon in this new state of mind I felt that I belonged to the country, that I was again a part of it as I had been in my childhood when we used to go up to the Mountain every summer, and I used to play among the pines and mulberry trees of Suk-el-Gharb and run up and down the village street doing shopping for my mother or buying sweets and marbles for myself. I found myself at home among the people, not only among those who had received an English education like myself and could talk about Shakespeare and Keats, but among the common people, the un-Westernized mountain-folk, the peasants in their vineyards, the shopkeepers and taxi-drivers in the villages; Nagib the grocer, and Tanios, the labourer who worked in our garden in the summer and looked after the house in the winter when we were away. I found that I had much in common with them, that we spoke the same language with the same accent and inflexions and idiom, enjoyed the same jokes and had the same feelings for the vineyards and fig trees and the stone walls that kept up the terraces on the mountainside. One day, Tanios was building such a wall in a new part of the garden behind the house, while Jean and I stood by watching him. He worked in silence for some time, apparently doing a mechanical job, one that he had done hundreds of times and that could have no special interest for him. Then he stopped, and stepped aside to survey the wall, and a smile of pleasure and wonder spread on his simple face. " The Lord's name be blessed," he said, " you put stone on stone and it becomes a wall," and he looked at his creation proudly.

In every country there are two planes of culture. There is the culture which consists in the national language as it is spoken, with its humour and songs and the emotional content of its cherished words; in social customs and general reactions to the ordinary occurrences of life; in common tastes in food and drink; and, above all, in a common feeling for the land and its produce and the air above it. This culture belongs to the whole people. The university man and the simple peasant meet at this level and share a common experience. On this plane I was now completely at home in Syria, not only among the Christians but also among the Moslems, and I realized that it was out of the common experience of the whole people on this plane that the rudiments of a national consciousness integrating Christians and Moslems were beginning to develop. But this is not

enough. For there is a higher plane of culture, the plane on which a man lives his highest intellectual and spiritual life, on which he faces the ultimate issues of life and decides his attitude towards them. At this level the bonds of union that hold below snap. Friendly back-slapping, jesting in a common speech and a common taste in the more superficial experiences of social life are not enough to bridge the gulf that yawns between different moral values and intellectual standards. With education, the divergences between Moslems and Christians often became accentuated instead of disappearing completely, since for the Christians education meant a closer approach to Europe, often amounting to complete identification with the tradition of Western culture, whereas for the Moslems it meant generally a conscious reaffirmation of Arab and Islamic culture. A few Moslems did become completely Westernized as a result of their education in European schools, but the number of those attending European schools (and not many of them became fully Westernized) was very small in comparison with those being educated in their own Government or national schools where the emphasis was naturally on the Arabic language and Islamic culture. On this higher plane of culture it was impossible for me or any Christian to feel completely at home with the Moslems. We could feel at home with Westernized Moslems like ourselves; we could feel at home with all Moslems on the plane of common national culture, but at the higher levels of thought there was little common ground between the educated (but un-Westernized) Moslem and the educated Christian Arab. They belonged to entirely different traditions which have existed side by side now for fourteen hundred years without coming together or influencing each other to any significant extent.

When the Arabs surged out of their peninsula and broke in on the Byzantine world with its Hellenic-Roman-Christian tradition, they came not only as conquerors but also as crusaders with a message of their own to give to the world. They were in the mood in which men militantly desire to impart, not to receive new truths, and they had a faith which conditioned and dictated every action of their lives and spoke the last word on moral values and social relationships with an absoluteness that shut out all incentive to further questing. In this state of mind they were, unlike the Romans when they conquered Greece or the Goths when they conquered Rome, impervious to the Hellenic message, that message which fused into Christianity at its birth helped to save the Christian world from stagnating in the barren wastes of a narrow and immutable dogmatism, and kept animating it through the ages with the spirit of free enquiry and above all with that consciousness of imperfection without which there can be no striving towards a higher life. Despite their own brilliant achievements and their great service as the carriers of Greek thought to Europe, the Arabs never

really assimilated the spirit of Hellenic culture. They took from it only its externals, the mathematical and physical sciences, its formal logic and abstract intellectualism, but their minds were inaccessible to its spiritual message, and inaccessible they have remained, in the main, till the present time. Humanism, that passionate interest in man and his great adventure, is not a marked feature of the Arab tradition, and the adventure itself on the spiritual plane is somewhat tame, as witness the almost complete absence of the drama, the novel, music and painting from Arab civilization. The only arts in which the Arabs achieved any self-expression worth while are architecture—the most abstract and least personal of the arts—and poetry; and while some of their poetry is very fine, a great deal of it is mere rhetoric. In philosophy, there have been a few isolated attempts here and there, but no sustained tradition.

And while the Arabs remained confined within the rigid limits of this culture, the Western tradition, across the Mediterranean, had developed into a world civilization. It had become the main stream of progress, no longer confined to the country of its origin, but flowing across every continent and encircling the globe. Yet the Arab world, lying on the fringe of Europe and nearer to it than any of its offshoots East or West, was still outside this tradition, a mere dweller in the suburbs of this world civilization, averse to real assimilation, copying only its material side but, in the main, failing to understand its values, or deliberately rejecting them as something foreign to its spirit. It was a reaction of suspicion and resentment; suspicion of Western civilization because it was the civilization of the Christian world, and resentment against it because it belonged to and came with the Imperial Powers, whose domination of the Arab world since the disappearance of the Turkish Empire had offended the national dignity of the Arabs and provoked among them a strong reaction of hostility and resistance. The results were unfortunate both for the Arabs and the Western nations. For not only did this mean that the Arab world remained backward and unable to join the main stream of progress, but also that it was oppressed by a sense of bewilderment and frustration which reacted adversely on international relations. The Arabs felt their isolation in a world which, developing along different lines from their own, had attained great heights of achievement, leaving them behind. They were torn between the desire to emulate and even enter this world—for they were ambitious of progress—and their hostility to it as a world which was reluctant to recognize their independence and accept them as equals in the family of nations.

These problems, the conflicts they implied and their possible solution could be clearly seen in the Lebanon, which was unique among the Arab countries in that its population consisted of Christians and

Moslems in almost equal numbers,[1] and in that it stood both geographically and spiritually on a peculiar fringe between Europe and the Arab world proper. The beginnings of national integration which one could see there between Moslems and Christians revealed themselves in a new kind of Arab national consciousness, peculiar to the Lebanon but pregnant with the suggestion of a universal solution for the whole Arab world. For in it elements of the Arab heritage were for the first time fusing with Western influences to produce a mentality which, without ceasing to be Arab, was geared to the wheels of world progress and integrated with the Euro-American system. The Lebanese Christians were willing to co-operate with their Moslem compatriots in building up a Lebanese nationalism, but only on condition the Lebanon remained independent of the surrounding Arab states which were predominantly Moslem, and retained its peculiar culture as a country that had always been mainly Christian and had in modern times developed spiritually under Western influence. The Lebanese Moslems, on their part, accepted the Christians' conception of a purely Lebanese nationalism, and showed their willingness to be loyal to it provided the Christians did not interpret it in a way to encourage Western domination of the country or, through it, of the mainly Moslem Arab states of the interior. The Lebanese Moslems themselves, particularly those of Beyrouth, were more Westernized than their co-religionists of Syria, Palestine and Iraq. Living side by side with a large Christian population, in a country that had come more under Western cultural influence than any other in the Near East, they had developed a broader outlook than the Moslems of these other countries. Here then was a hope that a synthesis between Arab nationalism and Western culture might be achieved, that the integration which the Lebanese Christians themselves had achieved in their own minds and lives between the Arab elements in their background and the cultural trends that linked them with the West might be reproduced on a national scale between them and the Moslems, and that the Lebanon might become a stronger link than it had ever been between the Arab world and the West, the interpreter of each to each and a stimulating example of that union between the two without which the Arab world must remain isolated and backward.

I and many of my friends became increasingly aware of these issues, deeply interested in the problem and its solution as we envisaged it. We had many friends among the Moslem Arabs and we developed a real sympathy with them and with Arab nationalism. We had enough in common with them to understand their difficulties and aspirations

[1] This is so now in the Greater Lebanon, a new political unit formed after the last war by the annexation of the Coastal Cities (Beyrouth. Tripoli and Sidon) and the Bekaa plain where the majority are Moslems, In Mount Lebanon itself the Christians form a large majority.

intuitively before subjecting them to rational analysis, and whenever we subjected them to such analysis we found our intuitions confirmed. Some of us achieved, or thought we achieved, complete identification with them, became Arab nationalists in the belief that Arab nationalism was a secular movement in which Moslems and Christians could equally share. But many of us felt that Arab nationalism was still mainly a Moslem emotion and movement in which we had no real place, however much we might sympathize with it. We wanted it to become genuinely secular. We wanted the whole outlook and culture of the Arab world to become secular, leaving religion, as the West had learned to leave it, to the domain of intimate personal experience. We wanted to feel completely at home with the Moslems. The human desire for friendship and brotherhood among people living together and sharing many of the significant experiences of life was strong on both sides. But though in many cases individual sympathies and a reciprocal tolerance and liberality of outlook resulted in the understanding and trust of genuine friendship, in general there were serious barriers of which both sides were aware. We, the Christinas, felt that we were a part of the great world outside and that the Moslem Arabs—in so far as they remained strictly Moslem—did not belong to it. It was not that we wanted them to belong to our religion. Many of us like, myself, had long since ceased to subscribe to any creed. We could not call ourselves Christians in any meaning of the word save the purely historical, and we certainly felt no religious animus towards the Moslems. For the moral virtues of the Moslem religion, for the genius of the Prophet who founded it and for the great achievements of Arab civilization at its height, above all its tolerance and its democracy in the days of the great Caliphs, we had a genuine admiration. Those of us who knew Arabic well cherished it and took a proprietorial pride in its treasures of prose and verse. But we felt that in the world of to-day the road to progress was the highway of Western civilization. We wanted the Moslem Arabs to join us on that highway not as casual sightseers, but as purposeful travellers determined to reach the same end as ourselves —full membership of the modern world. Some of them had indeed joined us, and together we marched along in good companionship. But there were still many who refused to tread that road, preferring to pursue their traditional course in the opposite direction along the country lanes of the past, or who if they trod it at all did so with a mistaken idea of the purpose of the journey and little chance of deriving any benefit from it.

The Near East was being flooded with a wave of superficial Western culture, mainly of a materialist nature, which while giving people the illusion of modernization and progress was really doing them a good deal of harm. For it was destroying the values and sanctions of their old life, without giving them any real values or sanctions to take their

place. It was destroying the spirit of the Arab tradition, while putting in its place only the material framework of Western civilization, and the result, noticeable in many parts of the Near East, was a growing moral confusion leading to cynicism.

Only part of the blame for this result could be laid on the Arabs themselves. It was natural that in the first flush of nationalism and yearning for freedom from foreign rule they should, in some measure at least, be psychologically resistant even to the best Western influences. But for the most part, the best, the genuine article, was not offered them, or offered in such a way that they could not accept it. And the blame for this rested with the European nations. The British, with the notable exception of Victoria College, did not boast a single educational institution of any significance in the whole of the Middle East. The French, it was true, had many schools and colleges, and even a university, but until the comparatively recent appearance of the Mission Laïque, all these had been religious schools—Jesuit and Frères —with a strong Roman Catholic bias, and as such not calculated to appeal to the Moslems. Individual Moslem scholars attended them, but in the main they catered for the Christian population, particularly those sects in communion with the Church of Rome. The Americans too opened many schools, particularly in Syria and the Lebanon, where their effort reached its peak in the University of Beyrouth, the biggest and most influential educational centre in the Arab world. This University had done a great service to the Arabs by training, over a period of eighty years, thousands of them for the liberal professions and for administrative posts in the various Governments of the Near East, and by being generally a radiating centre of enlightenment. But it had not been a channel for the communication of Western culture in its deeper meanings to the Arab world. The teaching of English in its preparatory section and feeder schools was totally inadequate, and the study of the Humanities in its School of Arts had till lately been too superficial to impart anything of real value.

The only hope, it seemed to us, was that with the attainment by the Arab nations of independence and the transformation of the relationship between them and the European nations from one of domination and resistance to one of equality and co-operation, the Moslem Arabs would become more truly receptive to the Western message, seeing in it not the message of a hated imperialism and an alien religion but that of a secular world civilization; and that the Western nations, for their part, would awaken to the importance of this matter and see to it that the highest cultural and moral values of Western civilization, and not merely its dross, were presented to the Arab world in an acceptable manner.

CHAPTER XXXVII

NEW HORIZONS

ALL the evolutions of my mind until that time, all the conflicts and reconciliations I had gone through had taken place within the framework of the 19th century conception of life and political relations implanted in me by my education. In no essential had I broken out of the framework. Even my first revolt against British Imperialism had not been, in that sense, revolutionary. I had merely moved over from the British side of the fence to that of the subject peoples, but on this side as on that the terms in which I thought and the aims which I pursued were a product of the British tradition of liberal, *laissez-faire* democracy and belonged to the world as I had been accustomed to think of it since my earliest days : enlightened imperialism, nationalism, independence, the sovereignty of the nation-state and the liberty of the individual conceived in the capitalist context of private ownership, free enterprise and class relations. When I became an Arab nationalist it was the old European ideal of political independence in a world of sovereign states that stood out before me as the legitimate and desirable aim of the Arab countries. That world still seemed to me in its broad outlines an eminently satisfactory world, and my wish was merely that the Arab countries should achieve full membership of it on a footing of equality with the Western nations. That was what all the Arabs felt. Complete independence and absolute sovereignty were the attributes of honoured nationhood, the proud possession of every nation that wished to live and be respected by the world. Without them you felt inferior to the other nations, you felt that even as an individual and whatever your personal attainments were you would never be accepted as an equal by the sons of the free and sovereign states, that they would always mentally place you in a lower class than that to which they belonged in the human hierarchy, because they were free men and you were in a subject position with the national status of a minor or a mental defective. Nor was the instinct of the Arabs wrong to crave for their independence. Their impatience of foreign control was a natural and healthy impulse of resistance to the domination of their will and their interests by the wills and interests of other nations who claimed absolute sovereignty for themselves. It was the only defence and the only reasonable aspiration they could have in a world dominated by the nationalist ideal. All they asked for was equality. All they desired had been desired and attained by the Europeans before them, had been formulated by those Europeans into

a sacred creed and taught to the Arabs in European history, literature and political doctrine.

As long as I had believed in that ideal my attitude towards Arab nationalism had been wholehearted and free from misgivings. But all the time, as the years passed, a different set of influences coming from the outside world was acting on me, the awareness of new problems and larger issues, ideas of which I had become intellectually aware at Oxford but which at that time had made little impression on me. Gradually I was drawn into the agitated stream of international feeling that was flowing across the world, and began to share the anxieties and aspirations of all the men and women in all the lands who were reaching out across the old national frontiers to a new conception of the world and a new loyalty. Gradually the old framework of political ideas within which my mind had grown up began to collapse. The grim realities of the international situation; the world economic crisis, the rise of the Nazis and the danger of a new war were bearing down on it with an urgent and growing challenge. The old concepts of nationalism and independence were becoming less and less real every day; and in their place, new imperious realities were looming up, the inescapable unity of the world, the need for economic co-ordination and collective security, the conception of an integrated human society.

I could no longer think of nationalism and independence with the same enthusiasm as before. It began to seem to me unfortunate that just at the moment when the nationalist ideal, at least in its old form, was becoming an obsolete and disruptive force in the world, repudiated by progressive opinion in all the advanced countries, the Arab nations should be forced by their belated political development and the threat to their freedom from Western Imperialism to embrace it as a sacred creed and final aim. For me it had ceased to be that. It seemed now a narrow and irrealizable ideal, and the kind of independence it aimed at an abstraction that could have no real meaning for the small and industrially poor countries of the world, quite apart from the fact that it was not a legitimate ideal even for the big nations. And it was obvious that this was particularly the case in respect of those small and industrially poor countries that lay close to Europe in regions which already were or might soon become a field of competition among the big powers. The menace of such competition and the possibility of its leading to war was becoming imminent with the rise of Fascism and Nazism. How, in these circumstances could a small agricultural country in the Near East, or even a group of them, without modern military power or the means of it, be "independent" except as a polite and precarious fiction? The ideal solution, of course, was that an international order limiting all sovereignties should be set up to provide collective security and guarantee the internal liberty of all nations. But this was still an aspiration rather than a fact despite the

existence of the League of Nations. If Britain packed up and left the Arab countries entirely " independent," nothing was more certain than that some other power would seize the first opportunity to step into her shoes. Would the Arab nations be the better off for the exchange? I did not believe so, and many Arabs shared my view. Britain, apart from being more humanitarian than her possible successors, was an old nation whose nationalism and imperialism had passed their zenith, and in whose bosom a strong progressive movement was growing, animated by the new ideal of a world order free from domination and exploitation, a world order to which all former dependencies should be admitted as partners. Not abstract independence, therefore, but integration in this coming world order through their connection with Britain, was the ideal which it seemed to me the Arab countries should aim at. Not the complete rejection of Britain's influence, the termination of all political ties with her, but the use and modification of that influence and those ties towards a new end. Many of the Arab leaders themselves held this realistic view and acted on it even when they did not care to proclaim it in public utterances. That was the view, in fact, which found expression in the Anglo-Iraqi and Anglo-Egyptian Treaties.

Another question suggested by moods of calm reflection when the purely emotional phase in my reaction to Imperialism had passed, was, who was going to get and enjoy this " independence," even if it was a good and realizable thing? Under the impulse of a sweeping emotion, it was easy to say " the Arab nations want their independence and should have it." Rhetorically, one thought of a nation as a person having an individual will and a corporate self-interest. One said " the nation wanted this and that, the national interest demanded this or that." But rational analysis revealed fallacies in this conception. It revealed the existence of classes in the nation whose wills and interests were often in conflict. In the Arab nations generally the disparity between the classes both in education and wealth was shocking. Over eighty per cent. of the population were illiterate peasants living mostly in primitive conditions; another ten or fifteen per cent. were workmen and small craftsmen almost as poor and illiterate as the peasants. At the top a small class owned most of the land as well as the country's moveable wealth and, together with the richer merchants, controlled the machinery of government by money and influence. Most of the politicians and higher civil servants came of this class or became affiliated to it as they climbed up the ladder of advancement. A middle class, consisting of government officials, small merchants, commercial employees and members of the liberal professions, stood between the two, rapidly growing and asserting a progressive outlook, but as yet enjoying only a limited influence.

My attention was thus, bit by bit, diverted from the old political

conception of nationalism and independence to the economic and social realities that lie at the basis of political life, and in the light of these realities the old conceptions began to grow murky, the idea of independence to lose its glamour. I did not abandon it; I could not go back on it, but more and more it seemed to me that national independence in itself was an inadequate ideal; that its attainment, while satisfying the emotional nationalism of the politically conscious section of the people, was not going to mean much for the rural masses and the urban proletariat if it consisted merely in the transfer of ultimate control from foreign rulers to a small privileged class of native rulers. My first revolt against the idea of foreign domination having been an emotional revolt against authority and not a materialist revolt against exploitation, I had been all those years obsessed with one of the two main aspects of the human complex of relations, to the exclusion of the other; with the conflict of wills rather than the conflict of interests. I had seen the world as a place in which the will of the members of one nation had to obey the will of the members of another nation, in which the Egyptian Minister had to comply with the views of his British "adviser" and the Sudanese Mamur had to carry out the instructions of his District Commissioner. I had not seen it as a place in which the economic interests of one class were sacrificed to those of another, in which the Egyptian fellah had to work for the benefit of both the Egyptian landowner and the British capitalist. I had not even realized how intimately this question of domination and subjection was connected with the facts of economic life, having always thought of it on the psychological plane. And so the target of all my feeling and thinking had been the liberation of the will of subject nations conceived as persons, all my concern with national, not with class, questions. Now for the first time I began to realize that class relations were just as grave a problem as international relations, that the emancipation of the peasant population of the Arab countries was even more important than the attainment by them of national independence. The emphasis in my mind shifted from individual and national freedom to economic and social justice.

These new ideas started a revolution in my political outlook, and soon I was applying my new outlook not only to the Arab countries but to Britain itself and the whole world. There was, of course, no comparison, in degree, between social conditions in the Near East and in Britain, but in kind and fundamentally I realized the same economic facts and class relationships existed there as here—controlled by more progressive laws, humanized by a superior culture, offset by a more real democratic tradition and infinitely better social services, but still at bottom belonging to the same structural pattern: the concentration of wealth and effective political power in the hands of a small class of owners; the toiling of the masses mainly for the benefit of that class;

the pursuit in the name of the nation, of policies too often dictated by, and framed in the interest of, one small section of it.

From that moment I aligned myself with the Left movement. This was the second revolution in my political outlook since I left Oxford, but unlike the first it was intellectual, not emotional. Bit by bit I had lost all faith in the old world of private ownership and production for profit. I became convinced that it was a bankrupt, moribund world, wasteful, cynical, maintaining from motives of self-interest or cherishing from ignorance a number of dangerous illusions as the basis and justification of its existence; the illusion of free competition to camouflage monster monopolies, that of individual liberty to conceal economic chaos and the wretchedness of poverty for the masses; that of private initiative to mask the sinister forces that held the individual in their grip; that of political democracy to mask the tyranny of finance and the economic subjection of the workers.

England, which till then had been my paragon of political and social organization, ceased to be so. True, my new ideas themselves came largely from her, were shaped under the influence of her progressive thinkers, and in that sense were a development of the British liberal tradition in which I had grown up. True, also, that my own receptiveness to these new ideas was the result of the British liberal education I had had, an education which though it had not given me much direct insight into the realities of life at the time, had at least endowed me with the ability to think for myself, and with the freedom to revolt even against its own tenets. Again, the Left movement to which I attached myself was the British Left movement. But the old England, with her economic and social system, England as she was still organized nationally, despite the views of her enlightened and reforming sons, was no longer the Mecca of my aspirations. That part of her seemed to belong to the past, and my thoughts began to turn to Russia as the herald of the new dawn. Soviet Communism apart from being a system that promised to produce more and to distribute what it produced more equitably, apart from giving a new faith to men and integrating them into a society with a collective purpose greater than the aggregate of their desires for personal gain, offered the hope of a reasonable solution for the nationalist problem. Everywhere else in the world nations were either independent of one another or held in subjection, the weaker by the stronger, in circumstances which offered no guarantee to the former against exploitation; and neither of these two conditions was satisfactory. Only the Soviet system seemed to provide a satisfactory compromise between the claims of nationhood and the need of the world for political integration on a new plane: cultural nationalism and self-government in purely internal matters, coupled with political and economic federation for all matters of common interest. Even the most backward provinces of Russia, which under the Tsarist régime

had been colonies in every sense of the word, were now members of the Soviet Union on this basis. And because the Soviet Union was based on a socialist economy and free from the influence of capitalist interests, there was a reasonable guarantee that these small and backward national communities would not be exploited by Russia herself or any of the other big members of the Union. The canker in the relations between Britain and her dependencies was Capitalism, the power and motives behind vested interests. That was why when Britain spoke of emancipation for her colonies, of the Empire developing into a commonwealth or association of partners, she sounded insincere and provoked mocking smiles. That was the difference between her and Russia, and not until she became a Socialist country could she hope to do what Russia had done.

But if she did? . . . Here was an inspiring possibility, one of the biggest opportunities in history for a great forward move; the conversion of England herself, the mother of political liberty and popular government and one of the main repositories of the humanitarian tradition of Western civilization, into a real economic and social democracy, and the transformation of the British Empire into an association of partners free from the fact or the suspicion of exploitation. Was this too much to hope for? I did not believe it was, and I hoped for it with all my heart. Though my mind had turned to Russia, my heart was still in England and I wanted her to be worthy of her destiny. It seemed to me that she was standing at a turning point in history, having reached (and passed) the zenith to which she could rise on the old foundations, and delivered the last letter of her message to the world as the mother of Parliaments and of Classical Economics. There was nothing more she could give in the old forms, and the choice before her was to stagnate in those forms or break out of them and go forward to new heights of achievement and world leadership. For I was convinced that she had moral reserves which if tapped through new channels would make another great contribution to civilization. Russia, I believed, had discovered the secret of the new economic and social organization needed by the world. But Russian Communism had been born in violence, against a primitive background. It was harsh and needed humanizing. England had what Russia lacked, the moral values of the liberal tradition, the spirit of humanism. It would be better for the world if Socialism came to it not from Russia alone, but from Russia and England together. The best that England had to give fused with the best in Russian Communism would give the world a new civilization binding the past to the future in a healthy synthesis. It was therefore imperative that Russia and England should come together and co-operate in defending the peace of Europe and guiding her destinies. I hoped and prayed for this.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE YEARS OF DESPAIR

BUT for many years my prayers were doomed to disappointment. Those were the years of reaction and appeasement, when England rejecting her great chance, blind to her destiny, was sinking deeper and deeper into the morass of conservative stagnation and cynicism. At home she was clinging to the old forms with the desperate clutch of a dying man; and the more obsolete the forms became, the more desperately she clung. Abroad she hugged the *status quo*, terrified lest the festering old order should crumble, ready to condone any crime, to come to terms with any criminal from fear, not really of war, for that did not become a real fear till the later stages, but of social revolution on the continent, of the collapse of those friendly bulwarks against Communism which Hitler and Mussolini had so obligingly erected in the heart of Europe. Or so, at least, it seemed to me. So also it certainly seemed to Russia. Instead of drawing closer to the Soviet Union, the Britain of Baldwin and Chamberlain flirted with the German and Italian dictators, and the rift with Russia grew wider and wider. It became very difficult for me and those friends of England who thought like me in this part of the world to retain our faith in her. We knew, of course, that millions of people in England thought like us and were in despair about the way their country was going. But they seemed unable to do anything, they had no power and those that had the power went on, either from blindness or from more sinister causes, leading her down the perilous slimy slope. They led her into the Palazzo Venezia to drink a toast to the Emperor of Ethiopia, into Non-Intervention on behalf of the murderer of the Spanish Republic, into the bandits' den and slaughter-house of Munich. And all the time they led her away from Russia, and straight into the jaws of the coming hell.

There were one or two moments which shone with a bright hope that lifted up our hearts, but only to dash them down again into the darker gloom that follows a lying hope. One such moment was that which brought to us on the wireless Sir Samuel Hoare's speech at Geneva in the early days of the Abyssinian crisis. I listened to that speech with Emile Kfouri and a few other friends. We had been following the crisis with anxious hearts convinced that this was the parting of the ways for the world, and hoping that England would lead the nations decisively along the Geneva road. We had been greatly cheered by the result of Lord Cecil's Peace Ballot. It seemed that public opinion in England was alive to the gravity of the crisis and the

decisive nature of the occasion. Her people had spoken with vision and courage, demanding collective action against the aggressor. Would their Government prove worthy of them? We waited for the answer, and when Sir Samuel Hoare went to Geneva to announce Britain's attitude we grouped round the wireless in tense expectation to hear his speech. I remember the delighted looks of my friends, the brightness that came into their eyes as we listened to the B.B.C. news reader enthusiastically quoting passage after passage. One after another we raised our heads, scarcely believing what we heard, looking at each other with exultation to hear Britain's Foreign Secretary express our own feelings and utter our own thoughts in every word he said. This was England's voice saying what we had been yearning to hear England say, proclaiming her decision to take the new road and follow it to the end. " Damn it," said Emile. " If we'd written this speech for him ourselves it couldn't have been better." It seemed too good to be true. It was.

I was in despair, disgusted, outraged in my most sacred feelings. And the attitude of my British friends in the Sudan added every day to my despair. With a few exceptions, they seemed to be blind to what was happening and what lay ahead. Intelligent, university men, citizens of a great democracy, they were, many of them, not only completely uninstructed about elementary political and economic realities, but also frankly indifferent to the crucial issues of the day. " Well," they would say when I went for them, " it is really no concern of ours. We've got our own particular jobs to do here. We don't know the facts about the international situation. We've got a government elected by a majority of the nation, and we leave all that to it," and with the traditional discipline of the British Public School character they left " all that " to it and meekly followed Baldwin and Chamberlain from one disaster to another. It is true that they could not have done much about it, a handful of Britons living in the Sudan and scarcely ever present in England during a general election, but that they should not *feel* like doing anything about it, that they should not realize that there was something terribly wrong, and that they, as the best educated citizens of one of the principal protagonists on whom the fate of the world might depend, were intimately concerned in it—this was the significant and shocking part of it.

I was also shocked by the attitude of my own people and most of my friends in Syria during the Munich Crisis. Nobody seemed to care about the issues at stake. The one general concern was that there should be no war. Personal fear of what war might bring was the universal feeling. People remembered the last war, the blockade, the famine, and were terrified of a repetition of what they had then suffered. It was an understandable emotion, and besides, many of them were, with much more excuse than my British friends in the Sudan,

completely ignorant about the issues involved; or from what they knew about Europe had become so cynical that they could not believe in any international ideal and were convinced that nothing was worth caring about except one's personal skin. I might understand this attitude but I found the atmosphere that resulted from it most depressing. What I feared was not war but another immolation of democracy and another triumph for Hitler and Fascism. When Chamberlain and Hitler parted in anger at Godesberg I took heart, but when it was announced that they were to meet again at Munich with Daladier and Mussolini, my heart sank again. My intellect tried to believe that this was a good thing, but my instincts knew that it was disastrous. We had no wireless in our house and so used to go to my uncle's house, a hundred yards away, to hear the news there. On the day of Munich we had supper in a hurry and returned quickly to my uncle's house to hear the first news of the Meeting. There was myself, Jean, my mother and sister. My heart was heavy with misgivings and also with distress that we (Jean and I on the one hand, and my mother, sister and practically everybody else around us, on the other) were hoping for different things. When we were a few yards from my uncle's house they heard our voices and a cousin of mine who was there ran out on to the balcony and shouted "Peace! Peace! No war! They have agreed." Her voice rang with the hysteria of joy and was answered by my mother and sister with exclamations and eager questions for more information, in the same jubilant tone. On my ears, however, the news she shouted fell like a dreaded stab. Without hearing any details I knew at once what it meant and a feeling of moral nausea gripped my heart. I tried to sound cheerful, to join in the general happiness, but could not. When we reached my uncle's house we found it full of relatives and friends all bubbling over with the excitement of a great relief, cutting in on each other to tell us the news which they had just heard straight from Munich, told to the world by a German announcer. No war! The Big Four had agreed. Peace on Earth! Goodwill to men! This was what I heard, but what my heart told me was something quite different. To every word I heard an answering word, which I knew to be true, came from the depths of my mind: Betrayal. Surrender. Murder of Czechoslovakia. Death for Europe.

The years passed, the disasters multiplied, war came nearer and nearer. Axis propaganda became very active in the Arab countries, seizing every opportunity, exploiting every fact or illusion, to foment hatred of England and create a belief in her decadence and impending doom. Neither was a very difficult job. The Baldwin-Chamberlain record in foreign policy spoke for itself. The Arabs, like the rest of the world, saw Britain in full retreat before the snarling dictators and were ready to believe that her day had come. The masses in the Arab

countries were dazzled by Hitler's might and repeatedly successful display of force. Like the crowd that admires the hero of a cow-boy film they admired and applauded the German dictator. Simple, ignorant people, they saw Hitler as a glorified Tom Mix, avenging the wrongs done to his country—the heroine in distress—after the last war, and they admired his prowess and success. They also derived a personal satisfaction from his success. It was humbling for England, and they liked to see England humbled. She had been the mistress of the world for too long, the haughty governess of the Arab countries. Her sons in their dealings with the Arabs had acquired a reputation for arrogance which made them unpopular. Few of them were known and liked as human beings. They were seen from a distance, as I had seen them in my early days in the Sudan, and their power was felt to be galling. Nobody seemed to be able to challenge that power, to humble that pride. The Arabs themselves certainly could not. Then a legendary champion from the North had appeared, a giant who had no fear of England, who smacked the old bitch in the face and kicked her on the buttocks until she ran away. It was damn good fun, a spectacle that afforded a sweet vicarious revenge to all those who had smarted impotently under British domination.

But there was more deadly ammunition than this ready for use by Axis propaganda. There was the bitter disillusionment which the Arabs had experienced at the hands of Britain and France at the end of the last war. There were the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the decisions of the San Remo Conference. There was the question of Palestine.

In the last war the Arabs, always till then pro-British, rose against the Turks and fought side by side with the British for the liberation of the Arab world, in return for a recognition by Britain of an independent Arab kingdom which (subject to certain reservations concerning French interests in the coastal strip of Syria and British interests in the regions of Basra and Baghdad) was to include all the Arab countries north of Arabia proper as well as the Hejaz. Before the end of the war, but after making this pledge to the Arabs, Britain entered into commitments with France and the Jews which were incompatible with the honest fulfilment of that pledge. The Sykes-Picot Agreement provided for the division of the Arab world north of Arabia proper into British and French zones of influence in terms which not only precluded the substance of independence but also passed sentence of mutilation, in the interests of rival imperialist claims, on certain regions that had always formed a natural unit, and made any development towards a wider union among the Arab countries impossible. The Balfour Declaration promised the Jews a national home in Palestine, in terms whose bearing on the promise made to the Arabs became the subject of an endless controversy. The Arabs maintained that they were a flagrant violation

of that promise; the British protagonists, that Palestine had under the stipulated reservations been excluded from it, or, alternatively, that the promise of a "national home" for the Jews, under the safeguards provided in the Declaration, was not incompatible with independence for the Palestine Arabs. But in truth the matter was much more than one of legal claims or contractual obligations. The Arab case rested on a moral argument rooted in primary human instincts and the most elementary notions of right and wrong. The Arabs felt with every fibre of their being that they had been betrayed by Britain. They felt that whatever the literal interpretation of the promise made to them might be, their natural rights and vital interests had been cynically disregarded. Syria and Palestine, which for centuries had been one country, were forced asunder to satisfy the rival claims of Britain and France. Independence was withheld. Worse still, the mandatory régime which was imposed in its place (and which many reasonable Arabs might have accepted as a step towards independence had it been genuinely conceived and applied as such) looked only too much like the old imperialism in a new and hypocritical form. The will of the mandated peoples in regard to the choice of the mandatory Power was in several cases completely ignored. Nor were their interests consulted in the division of their land into British and French territories, each with its customs, passports and separate currency. Lastly, into one of these mutilated and mandated territories a foreign people was brought by the mandatory Power to make for itself a national home and as it seemed, take the country away from its inhabitants. Not unreasonably the Arabs felt that the object of this mandatory régime was not to help them towards independence but to serve the interests of two imperial Powers and the Jews into the bargain. They felt outraged.

For the next ten years Syria, Palestine and Iraq seethed with resentment and revolt. The conflict between the Arabs and the mandatory Powers became a chronic war in which periods of sullen quiescence and uneasy armistice alternated with outbursts of violence which on several occasions assumed the proportions of full-scale national rebellions, while Mandatory policy, on its side, oscillated between repression which failed to break the spirit of resistance, and concessions which never went far enough to remove its real causes.

Eventually, it is true, matters improved in Iraq and Syria. The problem of Iraq was solved, on the political plane, by the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, by which Britain recognized the independence of Iraq, sponsored its admission to the League of Nations and undertook to defend it against foreign attack, while Iraq granted Britain certain safeguards for her imperial communications, agreed to harmonize her foreign policy with that of Britain and pledged her assistance in the event of war. A few years later France negotiated similar treaties with Syria and the Lebanon which, though the French Senate after the fall

of the Blum Government failed to ratify them, remained in latent being as an acceptable solution which might at any moment be realized. Much harm, however, had been done which a political solution could not immediately remove. Feelings had been embittered over a long period, and so much hostility and suspicion aroused in the Arab mind that in spite of these treaties of alliance and friendship a deep undercurrent of hatred continued to flow in the hearts of many Arabs in those countries, against both Britain and France. And in so far as Britain was concerned, that current was being fed by large draughts of sympathy with the Arabs in Palestine, for whose plight there seemed to be no redress.

For while a reasonable settlement had been reached in Iraq and formulated for Syria, it was becoming bitterly clear that the Palestine Arabs were precluded from all hope of achieving a similar satisfaction for their national aspirations. Whatever the British Government intended the wording of the Balfour Declaration to mean, the Jews had come to Palestine with the fanatical determination not to acquire a national home *in* it, but to make of it, the whole of it, their home, and convert it into a Jewish National State. Any casual visitor to Palestine could see the monstrous absurdity of the hope, which certain British statesmen have entertained, that Jews and Arabs might develop a common national consciousness as citizens of one country. No such fusion was possible because Jews and Arabs did not exist side by side as individuals but as nations, each with its own fierce nationalism, determined to assert its language, its religion, its culture; determined that the country should take on its colour and belong to it psychologically as well as politically; determined to be the majority, to win independence and set up a national state that should be the expression of its spirit and the guarantee of its continued existence. This meant that as long as the Jews were in a minority they were the implacable enemies of independence for Palestine; and that if they ever became the majority, independence for Palestine would have no value for the Arabs. Zionist policy was, in fact, to oppose and prevent independence until the Jews became a majority, while striving all the time towards this end by pressing Britain and the Palestine Government to admit more and more Jewish immigrants into the country. Nor could the British Government for its part, having once assumed the dual responsibility of the impossible position it chose to put itself in, grant independence to Palestine, or even a substantial instalment of self-government until the inter-communal problem was settled. The result was that while the other Arab countries had reached independence or were well on the way towards it, Palestine still remained, after nearly twenty years, under direct mandatory rule, with only the most rudimentary institutions of self-government, and no prospect of independence for its Arab people in any predictable future, if at all, as long as

Jewish immigration was on the increase and the threat of an ultimate Jewish majority hung over the country. It was this threat and the implications behind it that appalled and infuriated the Arabs. The idea that they might one day—that the Jews in point of fact intended them to—become a minority in an alien national state set up in their own country, aroused in them not only the deepest fears of the survival instinct, but the burning hatred which comes of an outraged sense of justice. Conscious of living in a world in which the elementary rights of nationality were recognized everywhere as axiomatic, they found it an intolerable injustice that they should be condemned to lose those rights in the land they had inhabited for centuries and made theirs, to a people who had left it two thousand years before. They admitted that they were still without the resources of the Jews, who, coming from Europe with superior education, technique, organization and capital, were naturally able to achieve better results in modern agricultural and industrial enterprise. But the comparison was unfair, and the Arabs felt that it would be a monstrous sin against them to accept it as an argument for handing their country over to the Jews. When the Zionists arrived the Arabs had only just won their freedom from the Ottoman yoke and any well-equipped body of immigrants coming into their country at that moment could have developed it better at the start than they themselves; but the civilized world had repudiated the principle that this fact entitled predatory colonizers to own and develop backward areas for their own benefit, and had proclaimed in its place the principle that the backward countries should be helped to develop for their own benefit and the benefit of the world at large. If Arab Palestine was backward at that moment it was the mission and the duty of the Mandatory Power to help it develop as an Arab country, and primarily in the interests of its native inhabitants.

Another line of argument that maddened the Palestine Arabs was what may be called the " you have so much and I want so little " line. The Arabs had all the Arab world and the Jews only wanted Palestine, a small corner of that world. Was it so much to ask for? Could not the Arabs be generous and let them have it? Could not the Palestine Arabs find a home in Syria or Iraq? To understand how the Palestinian Arabs felt about this argument, it is only necessary to imagine how the people of Devon or Cornwall would greet a suggestion that they should surrender their part of England to the Jews and find a new home in Scotland.

Every year when I went on leave during that crucial time just before the war, I used to visit Palestine. Year after year I saw the mounting exacerbation of Arab feelings, the growing hatred of Zionism and of Britain as its sponsor, and the tremendous opportunity this was giving Axis propaganda. Many of the Arabs were so enraged, so full of disillusion and hatred that they were past all critical thinking and ready

to believe and follow anybody who rose against England and the Zionists. They lapped up Fascist and Nazi lies. They saw the Zionists as the sinister world-menace of the Nazi legend, and England as a puppet power in their clutches. After a few attempts to argue rationally with some of those whom I knew among them, I realized how hopeless it was. To them Zionism, not Nazism, was the greatest evil in the world. All my arguments about the Nazi menace and the need to combat it collapsed before their conviction that to them, at least, the Arabs in Palestine, a German victory in the coming war could not bring anything more hideous than the Allied Victory in the last war had brought, and that for twenty years England had been enforcing against them an injustice as outrageous as anything Hitler had done to any of his victims.

I found the atmosphere of Palestine during those years unbearable for someone like myself coming from the outside world, where larger issues and less fanatical feelings ruled the thoughts of men. In Palestine there was nothing but hatred and venom on both sides, fear and violence or the threat of violence. My Arab friends were right in one respect at least. Whether Zionism was or was not, objectively, as evil a thing for them as Nazism was for its victims, the mere fact of its existence had created in Palestine the very kind of situation and atmosphere which the world had learned to associate with Nazism—a racial conflict animated on both sides by blind hatred and fanaticism; a ruthless struggle for domination; an egregious nationalism that would not admit the claims of any higher ideal than itself; the absence of all critical thinking, the shrinking of all perspectives to the narrowest focus of parochial bigotry; venom, fear and violence. Whatever the moral right of the Jews to Palestine, those were the results—hard brute facts—of their admission to it in the Zionist form: the generation, in twenty years, of the greatest concentration of inter-racial hatred known anywhere in the world outside the Nazi orbit.

In 1936 the exasperation of the Arabs exploded in a national rebellion which devastated the country for more than a year. The plight of the Palestine Arabs became the concern of the whole Arab world, and the more the other Arab countries sympathized with Palestine the more angry they felt with Britain and the more susceptible they became to Axis blandishments.

At last, in 1939, came the British White Paper, a statesmanlike attempt to define the meaning of the "national home in Palestine" which the Balfour Declaration had promised the Jews, and the limits to which the British Government was prepared to go in implementing it. The crux of the whole matter lay in the two questions of immigration and land acquisition. If no final limit were placed on immigration or the right of the Jews to buy land in Palestine, the Arabs were clearly in danger of ultimately becoming a minority in

their own country, and a landless minority at that, for unfortunately patriotism alone was not enough to prevent individual Arab landowners from selling their land when they were in need of money and the Jews offered them fabulous prices for it. For the Arabs this was an issue of life and death and all their concern and struggle had latterly centred on it. The paramount question now was not whether the Jews who had come into Palestine should remain or not (no responsible Arab leader envisaged their expulsion) but whether they were to remain a minority or become a majority; whether, that is to say, Palestine was to be an Arab or a Jewish state. The White Paper answered this question in favour of the Arabs. It imposed a final limit on immigration calculated to leave the Jews in a ratio of approximately 6 : 10 to the Arabs, and various restrictions on the sale of land calculated to prevent the dispossession of the Arab peasantry.

Ostensibly both Jews and Arabs rejected the White Paper, but while the opposition of the Zionists was bitterly genuine, since they saw in it the end of their dream of setting up a Jewish National State in Palestine, the opposition of the Arabs was largely formal. In their hearts all but the most violent extremists found in it substantial satisfaction.

I was not surprised at the opposition of the Arabs, realizing that it was a bargaining feint. But I was surprised and shocked by the opposition which the White Paper aroused in England from the Left movement and the accustomed exponents of liberal sentiment all over the country. At first I was more bewildered than shocked. I just could not understand why the champions of freedom in the British Parliament and the British Press should resent the doing of such elementary justice to a small Arab nation that merely desired to be free in its land. It seemed to me an absurd situation that this liberal and just measure should come from the Chamberlain Government—probably its one decent action in international affairs—and that the resistance to it should come from the Liberal and Socialist Opposition, from the *New Statesman* and the *Manchester Guardian*. There seemed to be something crazy about this alignment, something fantastic about the utterances I heard from my spiritual friends and brothers in England. They called it " another Munich," " An act of dastardly appeasement." They shuddered in shame as Britons at what their Government had done. I listened and read in amazement. Then suddenly I saw the explanation. These advocates of freedom were thinking only of the Jews. For them the Arabs obviously did not count. They saw the Palestine problem not as a triangle whose sides were the Arabs, the Jews and the British Government, but as a bilateral struggle between the Jews and the British Government. I suppose theoretically they were aware of the presence of the Arabs as a third party, but it was a very vague and impersonal awareness. They did not know the Arabs;

there were no Arabs in England, no Arabs in the British Parliament, no Arabs in the British Press, no Arab members in the Left movement that was fighting the battle of world freedom. But the Jews were known to them, were of them; they sat beside them in the House of Commons, wrote with them in Fleet Street and everywhere they voiced the Jewish grievance. Above all the Jews were being persecuted in Germany and everybody rightly felt sorry for them. They were the victims of Hitler, the enemy of the Left movement and of all that was liberal and progressive in the world. Liberals and Socialists therefore felt with them as they could not possibly feel with the Arabs, felt their grievance as a living reality personally present to them, and were righteously angry with the British Government for seeming to fail in its obligations towards them. That these obligations were limited by the rights of a third party whose claims on the British Government were legally as binding and morally superior, that the rights of this third party, the native inhabitants and owners of Palestine, would be grossly violated if the British Government gave the Jews all they wanted; that lastly what the Jews wanted did not belong to the British Government and the British Government had therefore no right to give it away—these facts seemed to have no place in their thought. It seemed doubtful whether the very existence of the Arabs as an important entity in Palestine was sufficiently recognized. I knew there was a strong suspicion that Lord Balfour himself was unaware of it when he framed his famous Declaration. Palestine, he apparently thought, was inhabited by the Turks, with a few Bedouin tribes in the hills. The Turks were "the enemy" who naturally would be driven out. The Bedouin tribes in the hills, of course, offered no problem. And so Palestine could be occupied by the Jews. The views which my friends, the British progressives, expressed on the White Paper made me believe that whatever conscious information they had obtained on the subject during the past twenty years, subconsciously they still thought about it in the manner of Lord Balfour. I tried to enlighten them. I wrote a letter to the *New Statesman* expressing the hurt feelings of a Left wing Arab at this apparent lack of sympathy in the British Left movement with the cause of Arab freedom in Palestine, and suggesting my explanation of it. It was not published. Several years later, provoked by a series of articles in the *Manchester Guardian* cynically advocating the abrogation of the White Paper and the creation of a Jewish National State in Palestine, I repeated the attempt. Again my letter was not published, though on this occasion I got a reply from the late Mr. Crozier, a few weeks before his death, explaining to me that as the subject had been closed for the time being, after adequate ventilation, he did not wish to reopen it by publishing my letter.

And so the years of despair passed, and the war came nearer. England had lost all her old prestige in the Arab world and much of

the confidence she had inspired before and during the last war. There were still in every Arab country people who despite the long feud with her and their many disappointments in her policy, despite their disillusionment after the last war and despite Palestine, still believed that of all the big Powers of the world England was the most liberal and reasonable to deal with, and did not desire to see her influence in the Near East displaced by any other. In Iraq and Egypt too there was quite a solid body of responsible political opinion behind the Treaties with England. But among the masses and the younger educated generation was a strong anti-British feeling and much admiration for Hitler and Mussolini. Many of the young intellectuals had been won over to the Fascist ideal and were forming Fascist parties of their own under Axis inspiration. There were, too, the self-seeking opportunists who thought that the Axis was a good horse to back in the coming race and saw in an Axis victory their only chance to come to power in their own countries. Altogether it was evident that when the war came Britain's position in the Arab world would not be too secure, and that the Arabs themselves would be in a divided mind. It was also clear that Britain had largely herself to thank for this state of things.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE NEW DAY

IT is the 1st September, 1939.

We had been in England on holiday for five weeks. Our family now consisted of two boys, the elder of whom was ten years old and due to go to Victoria College that October, and a girl. We had come to England for my annual leave late in July hoping to get back again to Khartoum before the storm broke, and were living in the bungalow we had bought a few years before in Surrey. But as the clouds gathered it had begun to seem unlikely that we should be able to reach the Sudan without getting caught in the storm. The time of our departure was getting near when one day towards the end of August I had received a confidential circular from the Sudan Government recalling me from leave and requiring me to report for embarkation at Glasgow on the 2nd September, but without my family. In a rush I had made all the necessary preparations both for my departure and for leaving Jean and the children behind in the bungalow for the winter. On the last day of August I had gone out in the afternoon for some last minute shopping in Woking where I had seen newspaper placards announcing " Children's Evacuation Begins To-morrow " ; Jean and I had had dinner with Michael de Selincourt, and spent the rest of the evening with him at the village Pub.

The morning papers had had no fresh news and I had not heard anything on the wireless. I was strapping my suitcases while the taxi waited to take me to Guildford station when one of our neighbours popped her head over the hedge and, repeating the words of the B.B.C., solemnly announced " Hostilities have commenced."

The rest of that day passed with the swiftness and vagueness of a dream. Jean and the children saw me off at Guildford station, where a number of evacuation trains passed us with their loads of labelled children looking out of the windows, waving and eating bananas. At Oxford I saw the London hospital patients being carried down on their stretchers ; at Shrewsbury, the first newspapers carrying banner headlines about the bombing of Warsaw. Passengers got in and got out, officers in uniform. Outwardly a journey like any other, but with a keen psychological difference which made of us a human collectivity. On an ordinary journey people come and go, each on his or her own errand, completely isolated from the others, each moving in a little world of thoughts and purposes about which the others know nothing ; the business man going to his office to deal with the problems of the day, the country lady to London to do her shopping like Mrs. Miniver.

But on this journey it was different. We were still individuals, each going to his own particular destination with an immediate object peculiar to himself, but behind all those immediate objects and first destinations there was one universal thought and one universal emotion which bound us all together. A few words spoken on the wireless a few hours before had transformed us all—the people in my compartment and in all the other compartments on the train, the crowds I had seen at Guildford station, the patients being unloaded at Oxford, the taxi-driver who had taken me to the station and the porter who had carried my luggage—from a mass of individuals into a real community sharing a paramount experience and conscious that a common concern and a common destination would soon be ruling all our lives. There was a good deal of talk in the compartment; the icy enclosures of the individual life were thawing rapidly in the warmth of this new fellowship. But even when we sat silent, or when somebody new came into the compartment and did not speak for some time, I knew that we were all thinking about, and in various ways feeling, the same thing. I had left my family behind and was going back to the Sudan, where my work would be to participate in the British effort to defend that country against the threatened Italian attack. That elderly lady sitting opposite me might be going to a small cottage in Chester or to a couple of old rooms in Birkenhead, but she probably had a son who would soon be going to the war, and Hitler's bombs would soon be falling on her old dwelling. If we had made that journey a year before there would have been no conceivable link between our two lives, but now our separate worlds had become one. This awareness of communion with the people around me seemed to enlarge and quicken my life. My heart glowed with a feeling of exultation.

We reached Birkenhead in the early evening, and I had to go across to Liverpool to take the midnight train from there to Glasgow. It was the first night of the blackout, and when I arrived at the Liverpool station, an hour or so before my train was due to leave, everything was in pitch darkness. My luggage consisted of two suitcases and a portable typewriter. I called a porter and he groped for it on the floor of the taxi. I thought he had got it all out, and did not notice that he had left the typewriter behind until we were inside the station. I ran back to the entrance but the taxi had gone. It seemed, by all indications, that I had lost my precious little typewriter. Several times before I had recovered articles lost in similar circumstances in England, but the facts this time were most unpropitious—the blackout, and only an hour before my train left. Without any real hope, I reported the matter to a policeman. He commented discouragingly on the shortness of the time I had, but said he would ring up the Lost Property Office and ask them to let him know if the typewriter was handed in before I left.

The station presented a nightmarish spectacle. Its lights, hooded in black from above, threw down a garish blue luminosity which lit up isolated circles on the floor separated from one another by a region of eerie penumbra. A large crowd seethed up and down the platforms, men and women, the former coming to board the trains, the latter to see them off. They moved and swayed in groups, holding hands and singing with drunken voices, not cheerfully nor mournfully, but with the hoarse and somewhat sullen aimlessness of the drunk. They looked like a chorus from Peer Gynt as they moved fantastically across the circles of blue light and into the dimness beyond.

I bought a paper and stood under a light to read it. I read " Ultimatum To Germany " splashed across the front page, and below it something about " The Western Front." I read them and re-read them, fascinated by their vivid echo in my mind, an echo that came back across twenty-five years as though those years had not existed. I was back in Omdurman, a small boy, in 1914, hearing my father and uncles uttering those very phrases, thrilling at the prospect of the coming contest between the England of my dreams and her nasty enemies . . . My reverie was suddenly cut short by a gentle tap on my shoulder. It was the policeman who had come to tell me that the Lost Property Office had just rung up to say that my typewriter had been handed in by the taxi-driver, and that I had just enough time to go their by taxi and recover it before my train left. Half an hour later I was on the train with my typewriter, delighted and more full of admiration than ever for the honesty of the common people of England. This was the kind of thing, this simple honesty and almost instinctive social decency and discipline, that endeared the British people to their friends in other lands. I had not even seen the face of that taxi-driver, but he remained in my mind as a symbol of that character and way of life which was so soon to be on its trial in the grimmest ordeal of history.

The next day I found myself together with three hundred and sixty other officials of the Sudan Government on one of eleven ships preparing to leave Glasgow for the Middle East in the first convoy of the war. The war itself had not yet come, for it was still only the 2nd of September and the British Government had not yet implemented their pledge to Poland. A certain uneasiness was felt by many of us. There was a sinister report that Mussolini had offered to mediate for peace. There was a faint Munich whiff in the air. Incredible as it might seem, I began to fear another surrender. But early the next morning all such doubts were allayed by the news that a final two-hour ultimatum had been delivered to Hitler, and at eleven o'clock, our ship being still in Glasgow harbour, we all—the three hundred and sixty of us—trooped into the lounge in solemn expectation to hear Chamberlain's broadcast to the nation. Again I felt that uplifting awareness of being something bigger than my individual self. A

common concern, visible on every face in that lounge, made of us an integrated whole, and the knowledge that all England and millions of people outside it were at that moment grouped round similar wireless sets counting the seconds with the same emotion and the same latent purpose made that whole a conscious part of something bigger still.

A few seconds ticked past, then Big Ben, sounding ominously fateful, chimed the quarter hour, and Chamberlain told the world that England was at war with Germany. I looked at the faces around me. An expression of relief was visible on them all, a relaxation of tension long endured, and I could almost hear a wave of easier breathing spreading round.

For me it was a moment not only of relief but of life reborn. For a year I had been living in the valley of the shadow which Munich had cast on Europe and the world. I had lost all faith in England and France and almost all hope in the future of the world as far as I could see into it. My fear after Munich was not of war, but of the gradual choking of the breath of life in the world under the tightening stranglehold of the Fascist monster. It had seemed only too likely that if Hitler was cunning enough not to start a war he would be able to get what he wanted gradually and indirectly—the subjugation of Europe to his will by the exclusion from the British and French Governments of all the free and doughty spirits bent on opposing him, and the gradual transformation of those Governments into satellite Fascist bodies willing to accept his supremacy in Europe and only too anxious to destroy Democracy in their own countries. His Saarbrucken speech, less than a fortnight after Munich, had intimated as much, and the British and French Governments were showing a growing impatience with those newspapers and members of the Opposition, in their countries, who refused to trust Hitler and went on attacking him. Such attacks, they said, were not in the interests of European peace. And this precisely was what I had feared, that in the interests of cowardly peace, or something more sinister, freedom would be, bit by bit, choked out of Europe and the world die " not with a bang but a whimper." It had been a terrible thought, which neither the pledge to Poland nor any of the subsequent moves of the British Government had effectively dispelled, not even the warning to Germany on the 1st September. It was only dispelled at a quarter-past eleven on the 3rd.

England was at war with Germany. After years of blindness and pusillanimity she had recovered her vision and courage. After repeatedly compounding with the greatest evil in the world to the detriment of her soul and the despair of all her progressive sons and friends, she had turned round, at last, to resist that evil, to defend everything that was of value in her way of life and to give new hope and leadership to the friends of freedom in every land. Whatever

I had thought of her during those years, whatever I still thought of her economic and social system, or of her policy towards the Arabs at the end of the last war, ceased to count. For the moment England was the leader of the world in a great war for freedom, and that was all that mattered. To her in this rôle I could give an allegiance as enthusiastic and undivided as that I had given her in the last war as a hero-worshipping child. . . . And Russia?

I preferred for the moment not to think of Russia. The Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact had shaken me profoundly. In the cold light of reason I could understand it. Munich, the Franco-German Non-Aggression Pact, Chamberlain's cold response to Russia's subsequent proposals for a six-Power conference and a full military alliance between her, Britain and France, and lastly his own tortuous scheme of pledges and counter-pledges and half-hearted attempts to conclude an alliance with Russia on a realistic basis had caused Stalin, not unreasonably, to lose all confidence in Britain and France and pursue independently the policy he thought best calculated to safeguard Russia's interests in the immediate future. All this was clear to my mind, nor did I for a moment believe that the Pact meant anything in the nature of an alliance between Russia and Germany. That was unthinkable. But all the same the Pact, coming at the height of the crisis when war with Germany seemed inevitable and the forces of resistance were finally lining up, had given me a violent emotional shock. It looked bad. It was crushing for all those who had believed in Russia to see her at the last moment, whatever provocation she had been given, refuse to take her stand where she naturally belonged, where we wanted her to be, in the vanguard of the fight against Fascism, and to appear for the moment, though only superficially, as Hitler's friend, displaying Swastikas in the streets of her Capital to receive the loathsome Ribbentrop. And the fact that all this seemed to justify Russia's enemies and detractors in England and elsewhere made it all the more difficult to bear. In the Sudan, among my British friends, I felt a special responsibility for Russia. I was known as her champion and would be held morally answerable for her action. For years I had been denouncing Chamberlain and extolling Stalin; and now it was so easy for my opponents to say that when it came to the point, Chamberlain did the right thing, what I myself recognized to be the right thing, and that Stalin had "funked it." It was a painful situation, and the most painful single fact in it was the disillusionment it had caused to my ten-year-old son, Michael. He was a very precocious boy, who had grown up to admire and believe in Russia, from the political conversations he heard at home and at the houses of many of our friends, much as I had admired and believed in England at his age, with all the fervour and implicit faith of childhood. His look when he had heard the news on the morning of August 23rd,

showed the pitiable ruins of that faith in a stare of helpless, utter bewilderment.

Nor could I stomach the line taken by the British Communists and the *Daily Worker*—the amazing argument that the Russo-German Pact was calculated to save the peace of Europe, and that if war came in the new situation, it would be just another imperialist struggle in which the workers would have no interest and which they should therefore denounce and boycott. I was revolted by this volte face and the servility of mind which seemed to lie behind it. That Stalin had good reasons for doing what he had done, I was prepared to admit. But that the British Communists, who for years had been denouncing appeasement and clamouring for a stand against the Fascist dictators, should, now that their country had resolved to make a stand, turn round from one day to the next and denounce the coming war just because Russia had found it necessary to sign a pact with Hitler—this I found shocking.

So, for the moment, England became again the sole claimant of my loyalty, England in spite of her class system and with Chamberlain at her head. And Russia receded into the background of my mind—a great hope in abeyance.

I arrived in the Sudan towards the end of September to find the Government and the people preparing to play their part in the war. We were not likely to be directly involved as long as Italy stayed out, but few people did not believe that sooner or later Mussolini would seize the opportunity to strike a blow at Britain in Africa. It seemed certain that before long we should be facing the danger of invasion from Italian East Africa and possibly from the Egyptian end as well. Militarily, and on paper, our position seemed hopeless. The Italians had an army of nearly three hundred thousand men in Eritrea and Abyssinia, with tanks and artillery and two hundred aircraft. We had the Sudan Defence Force, a well-trained efficient body of Sudanese troops commanded by British and Sudanese officers, but numbering no more than four thousand five hundred men and mechanized only to the extent of having six motor machine-gun companies, but without tanks or artillery; three British battalions, and two squadrons of Blenheims plus seven obsolete aircraft that looked like a relic from the last war. With these forces we had to defend a frontier of over a thousand miles, and there was no prospect of reinforcements for many months to come.

But if the military situation looked depressing, the political and psychological was very encouraging. The people of the Sudan, tribesmen and their chiefs, cultivators and traders, the educated class and the religious leaders were, with the negligible exception of a very small group of chronic malcontents, solidly behind the Government. Axis propaganda had had little success in the Sudan because there was little in the internal situation to help it. The factors that existed

in the rest of the Arab world were absent. Sudanese nationalism was still young and there had been no conflict yet between it and the Government. There were no bitter memories from the last war; there was no Zionism. The majority of the people were contented, and even the educated class were feeling reasonably satisfied with Government policy and hopeful about the future. All but a handful of young hotheads had the sense to see that a British victory was an essential condition of their continued progress and ultimate independence. Eritrea was next door to them, and they knew how the Fascists treated the natives there. The prospect of an Italian conquest of their country was intensely repugnant to them. Apart from Fascism and its political threat to their aspirations, the Italians had been known in the Sudan mainly as artisans, mechanics, small contractors. They were not disliked, but they were definitely looked down upon, jocularly called " macaroni eaters," and the thought of their becoming the rulers of the country was outrageous to Sudanese dignity.

When the hand that held the dagger struck eventually, the reaction of the Sudanese was clear and resolute. They supported the Government and the Allied cause in every way open to them and, for the most part, with genuine enthusiasm. At the meeting which the Governor-General convened at the Palace on the 11th June to hear from him the official proclamation of a state of war, Sayed Sir Abderrahman el-Mahdi, the foremost personality and most influential leader in the country, replied to the Governor-General's proclamation with a gallant speech in which he pledged everything he had to the support of the Government in the coming struggle. Tribal chiefs and members of the educated class alike, genuinely alarmed by the defencelessness of the country, exhorted the Government to raise a popular Sudanese army. " We're with you in this war," they said. " We don't want our country to be invaded by the Italians. Arm us and we will keep them out." This was not possible because neither the arms nor the instructors were available. But measures were set in motion at once to expand the Sudan Defence Force, and thousands of Sudanese volunteered for service in it. Meanwhile, two tribal forces, on guerilla lines, were formed on the Eastern border under the leadership of the local chiefs, and played a very useful part in helping the meagre regular forces to defend the long line of the frontier pending the arrival of reinforcements from abroad. This line was successfully held from June till September when Indian troops began to arrive and the build-up started for the offensive which four months later smashed the Italian power in Eritrea.[1] The civil population, for its part,

[1] After the conquest of Italian East Africa, two brigades of the Sudan Defence Force were moved to North Africa where they participated in the 8th Army's advance and relieved a substantial part of it for offensive operations by undertaking garrisoning duties all the way to Tripoli.

behaved admirably, contributed generously to the various war funds, bore the sacrifices demanded of it with no more than the grousing natural in the circumstances, and remained calm and actively loyal even at the darkest moment of that summer, when Kassala fell to the Italians and it seemed that there was nothing to stop them from marching on Khartoum.

My own work expanded considerably in bulk and character with the coming of Italy into the war. I was put in charge of Arabic propaganda. There was no broadcasting service as yet in the Sudan, and very meagre facilities for starting one under war conditions, but the attempt had to be made, and it was made with voluntary Sudanese assistance to start with. A Sudanese master of the Gordon College offered his services as news reader; poets and singers came forward to broadcast, free of charge, entertainment and encouragement to the troops in the field, and the local Pressmen gave commentaries on the war. We were all amateurs and had to work under extremely unfavourable conditions. Our studio consisted of one tiny room, without a fan and very hot on summer evenings, in the Post Office enclosure in Omdurman, and into this room we had often to squeeze four or five singers with their instruments. On one very hot night in July the news reader was broadcasting the bulletin while I was watching the reactions of the crowd who were listening to the loudspeaker in the square outside. Suddenly the newsreader's voice stopped. I thought it was the usual technical hitch and dashed into the studio to find out what it was. It was, in a manner of speaking, a technical hitch, but one of a novel kind. The newsreader wore glasses and the sweat pouring down his forehead had covered them with running rivulets. He had stopped to wipe them. To ensure the smooth reading of the rest of the bulletin I had to stand beside him and fan him with my handkerchief. But our greatest handicap in those early days was that while the studio was in Omdurman the office in which the bulletins were prepared was in Khartoum, six or seven miles away. We went on the air with the news as 6.30 p.m. and our last source of information was the B.B.C. 6 o'clock bulletin; but there was no receiving set in the studio, and so the newsreader had to stay in Khartoum till 6, pick up the latest flashes from London and, jumping into a car immediately, translate and jot them down on the way! The day the Dutch army surrendered, the news was first announced in the 6 o'clock bulletin from London, but for some reason we had had to leave Khartoum a few minutes before that hour, and so I had asked one of my colleagues to listen to that bulletin and ring me up to the studio if there were any important new items in it. Our bulletin had been prepared earlier in the afternoon and was mostly an account of the determined and heroic resistance of the Dutch. Five minutes before we went on the air, my colleague rang up. "Have you started?" he asked in a worried voice. I told

him we had not. "Thank God for that," he went on, "the Dutch have surrendered."

But the enthusiasm of our gallant helpers triumphed over every handicap, and the service was established. It grew from an experimental weekly broadcast to a bi-weekly and then a daily service. It acquired a suitable building and other facilities and was gradually put on a professional basis. When we advertised for a full-time paid newsreader, one of the candidates who came forward had been a leader of the anti-Government movement in 1924. His political convictions had undergone a complete change since then, and he came forward not merely to get a job but to serve a cause in which he genuinely believed. He proved the best candidate and was selected. From the first day his sincerity and enthusiasm were evident and like all the other Sudanese broadcasters of that crucial summer, he showed great courage in serving the Democratic cause. The Italians were massed threateningly on our frontier and, at some points, within it. Nothing seemed more likely than that they would invade the Sudan and reach Khartoum. Yet day after day, this gallant group of Sudanese came to the microphone and broadcast the severest denunciations of Fascism and its leader, both in a serious form and in caustic songs and verses.

This time of danger for us in the Sudan coincided with England's darkest hours. It was the time of the Battle of Britain and the beginning of the Blitz, and the Sudanese, who are a brave people and value bravery in others, were deeply moved by the courage, faith and endurance of the people of Britain. The dramatic quality of Britain's lone stand after the collapse of France appealed strongly to their imagination, all the more so for being superbly personified in the character, physical appearance and voice of one towering leader. Winston Churchill became the hero of the Sudanese, and the first time he appeared in a newsreel at the local cinema during the Battle of Britain, a storm of spontaneous cheering broke out from the crowd in the cheap seats—that crowd which in the years before the war used to clap force and success in the persons of Hitler and Mussolini.

In the twenties and early thirties Mr. Churchill had been one of my pet political aversions. He had symbolized to me all that was reactionary in British politics, all that was unsympathetic to the national aspirations of British dependencies in the East. He was bracketed in my mind with Lord Lloyd as the core of the die-hard opposition to any liberal change in the structure of the British Empire. But as the European situation began to oust everything else from my mind, and as Mr. Churchill began to emerge in that situation as one of the few men of vision and moral purpose on the democratic side, my feelings towards him had begun to change. His stature grew and his quality changed in my eyes with every crisis in the unfolding drama, and long before the war broke out, long before he became the recog-

nized leader of the British people I had come to regard him as the only hope of the cause in which I believed, and the only possible Prime Minister for Britain if war came. The morning after the debate on Norway which sealed the fate of the Chamberlain Government, I went to the office full of glee, having just heard the news and realized what it meant. I found there two of my British colleagues discussing the matter. They did not seem to think that Chamberlain would resign. After all, they said, he had not been defeated on the vote, he still had a majority of seventy. I pointed out that a majority of seventy when a good many of his former supporters had voted against him and many more had abstained from voting was on such a crucial issue as the conduct of the war tantamount to a vote of no confidence. They did not agree, and besides seemed to think it quite a good thing that he should remain. It would be so difficult to find a suitable successor to him. "Who," they challengingly asked me, "who, for instance, would you put in his place?"—"Why, of course, Winston Churchill," I said. They shook their heads. "No," they said wisely, "Winston is dangerous; he's too impetuous. Might run the whole thing to a standstill." That evening Mr. Churchill became Prime Minister.

Great as my admiration for him had become in recent years, it had been merely intellectual. But from that terrible moment when he became Prime Minister and his voice began to speak to the world from the last beleaguered ditch of freedom, I began to feel a great and reverent affection for him. I felt him growing, with the peril of the occasion, to a new stature of heart and spirit, to human dimensions before which all past differences and antipathies shrank to nothing. His voice summed up all the qualities I had ever admired in England—truth, decency, courage and moral resolve—and it expressed them in the language of Shakespeare. It was the voice of England, but it spoke for Humanity. The last hope of the world, the faith of three thousand years of civilization, the spirit of Man from the funeral oration of Pericles to Lincoln's Gettysburg speech breathed in it, and breathed indomitably with encouragement and inspiration to men and women in every land. Whatever his political past had been, whatever his future attitude to this or that might be, he was at that moment, and in the only connection that mattered, entirely good and great. And whether they knew it or not, he was defending the future freedom and happiness of every people in the world, independent or subject, within the British Empire or outside it—the Indians and the Arabs and the Africans, for whom the last ray of hope would die if Hitler won.

But many of them knew it, both in the Sudan and in other Arab countries. Even those Sudanese—and they were never more than a small minority—who were generally anti-Government and anti-British in the more superficial layers of their mind, knew in their hearts that Britain's cause in the war was theirs. I once asked a Sudanese friend

of mine, at a crucial moment of the war, what the Sudanese nationalists were really feeling. His answer was very illuminating. "Anti-British feeling," he said, "diminishes in exact proportion to the gravity of England's peril," and he proceeded to explain. As long as there had been no real danger of the Axis winning the war, the extremists had liked to see the British take a few knocks. To see British pride humbled without being in any danger of having to do with somebody far worse than the British, was quite a gratifying experience for their emotional nationalism. But when the danger of a British defeat became a stark reality, their attitude, with a few exceptions, changed completely.

The same phenomenon occurred in other Arab countries. Like the rest of the world all these countries had their pro-Axis faction, but it was noticeable that the size and enthusiasm of this faction shrank instead of rising at the decisive moment. There had been a lot of talk about the danger of the Fifth Column in Egypt and the existence of an anti-British feeling among a large section of the Egyptian people. Yet when Rommel stood at the gates of Alexandria, and the Egyptian people could have helped him to enter, they did not do so. Not only did their Government, under the doughty leadership of Nahas Pasha, stand firm behind the British army and give it loyal and probably decisive help, but the general feeling among the people at that moment was, according to the testimony of impartial observers, pro-British and strongly averse to a German invasion. I visited Damascus soon after the elimination of the Vichy régime in Syria in 1941, and met there a prominent Christian who was also a leading figure of the Syrian national movement and knew more about Moslem feeling than any other non-Moslem in the country. I asked him about the attitude of the Syrian Moslems to the British. His answer was that in spite of all the friction that had marred Anglo-Arab relations after the last war, and in spite of Arab resentment over Palestine in recent years, ninety per cent. of the Syrian Moslems had welcomed the arrival of the British with genuine pleasure and with a new hope that this time they would obtain at the hands of Britain the satisfaction of their national aspirations. "Their future attitude," he continued, "will naturally depend on the fulfilment of that hope." In Beyrouth I met a blunt old Moslem leader who told me much the same thing. "You hear much," he said, "about the Moslem Arabs being pro-Nazi. It is true that the ignorant masses have a primitive and superficial admiration for Hitler. It is also true that there is much anger with England over the question of Palestine. But don't believe that any responsible Moslem leader here really desires an Axis victory." Then he added shrewdly, "Some think an Axis victory is inevitable, and naturally want to be on the winning side." Only in Iraq was the anti-British party large and powerful enough to strike at a crucial moment. There, a chronic

state of political instability aggravated by a royal minority, and a young army shot through with political ambitions and intrigue gave the necessary opportunity to the anti-British faction. It was only, however, by a *coup d'état* that this faction seized power. The Royal House of Iraq, represented by the Regent, Prince Abdul-ilah (a pupil of Victoria College) and the lawful government remained loyal to the British alliance and co-operated in the quelling of the revolt. Subsequently the Iraq Government, under the leadership of that old and tested friend of Britain, Nuri Pasha es-Said, declared war on the Axis.

Britain had also a staunch friend in King Ibn Saud, the ruler of the only Arab country that was completely independent and had no British forces on its soil. His confidence in a British victory did not waver once, and he gave all the support, material and moral, that lay in his power. His pronouncements in favour of Britain and the Democratic cause carried special weight in the Moslem world, coming as they did from a ruler who apart from having no restrictions on his sovereignty, was the Keeper of the Holy Places of Islam.

Equally staunch in his friendship was the Emir Abdulla of Transjordan, whose troops fought gallantly in the Syrian campaign and also helped to quell the revolt in Iraq. Lastly the Arabs of Cyrenaica, under the leadership of their religious chief Sayed Idris el-Senussi, had ranged themselves solidly on the British side from the first moment of the war and rendered much help to the Allied forces throughout the fighting in the Western Desert. Nor should it be forgotten that the Arab leaders in Palestine called off the revolt at the outbreak of war, and that throughout its duration the Palestine Arabs caused no embarrassment whatever to the British Government.

The divided state of the Arab mind during the war caused me and all others who like me believed in the need for wholehearted Anglo-Arab co-operation, much distress, but unlike uniformed Englishmen who were merely perplexed and indignant at the existence of anti-British sentiment in the Arab world, we understood its causes and made allowances for it. The Englishman who had not made a study of Anglo-Arab relations since the last war, in other words the British public at large, was inclined to be shocked at what seemed to be sheer ingratitude or evil-mindedness on the part of the Arabs. Had not Britain liberated the Arabs from Turkish domination in the last war? Had she not given Iraq and Egypt their independence? Was she not defending them against invasion in this war and Nazi domination in the future? Were they not benefiting enormously from the presence of the British forces, selling them their labour and their produce at fantastic prices and making fortunes? Why then, when Britain was fighting for her life, were so many Arabs ill-disposed towards her? I was asked this question by a number of Englishmen during the war, and I gave them the answer I have tried to give in the foregoing pages.

Gradually, however, things improved in the Arab world. With the turning of the tide against the Axis, the uncertainties and divisions that had existed at the beginning of the war faded away, the Fifth Column lost the basis of its existence and the pro-Democratic elements came into their own. The declaration of independence for Syria and the Lebanon at the moment of the entry of the Allied forces into the country had made a very good impression, which was later confirmed by the encouragement given by Britain to the idea, perennially present in Arab minds since the last war, of Arab Unity. It seemed that things were definitely moving towards a happier stage in Anglo-Arab relations, and that a new and healthier synthesis would be possible at the end of this war than had been achieved at the end of the last.

Another great hope for me was realized on the 22nd June, 1941, when Russia rose to defend herself against Hitler's attack and so took her stand beside England in the fight. The alignment was now complete. The motives and character of the Soviet Union as an enemy of Nazi Germany became clear to the world. The progressive forces were joined in alliance defending the best in the past and the hope of the future, and encouraging the belief that out of their united effort would be born not only victory but a new and great synthesis of values for the world and the basis of a new political integration. My conviction that the future of the world depended on co-operation between Russia and England and on a political and moral osmosis between their two systems had grown into a faith, and though my loyalty to England in the first two years of the war was immediately wholehearted I was conscious, all the time, of another allegiance at the back of my mind and of the fact that until the two were united I could not feel happy about the future. Although it was a terrible thought that the Soviet people and everything they had built up and tried to do in twenty years were going to be exposed now to the horrors of a brutal invasion and perhaps to destruction, I was glad to see Russia in the war, not only for selfish reasons, because her coming in gave us a mighty ally, but also for her own sake and the sake of the world, so that she should play an active part in winning the war and shaping the future, instead of standing on the margin of history while the fate of mankind was being decided. Her coming in was also excellent moral propaganda for England in the Near East. Until Hitler's treacherous attack on the Soviet Union, many people in this part of the world, as perhaps elsewhere, had doubted that any principle was at stake in this war and inclined to the cynical belief that it was merely another struggle between rival imperialisms. Some even, deluded by German propaganda, had thought that the Nazi régime represented the interests of the common people better than the "Pluto-Democracy" of the West. These notions had been greatly confirmed by Russia's aloofness from the Democratic cause in the first two years of the war. Her sudden

appearance on June 22nd, 1941, as another victim of Nazi aggression changed the picture completely for many people. For me it merely completed it.

That active feeling of oneness with other people which I had felt on my journey to Birkenhead, and again when hearing Chamberlain's broadcast on the ship, had become a permanent part of my consciousness as the war developed. The thought, as I sat down every morning at my wireless set, that millions of people all over the world were also sitting at their sets, tuning in to hear the same news with the same hopes and fears; the fact that my work at the office was part of one prodigious human effort in which fighters and thinkers and manual workers in every job from England to New Guinea and from Cairo to Vladivostok were collaborating towards the same common end; the awareness that almost everything in life was related in some aspect or other to one central idea and social purpose which I and everybody I knew and whole nations unknown to me shared—all this filled me with a sense of fellowship and communion which warmed my heart. It made me feel that life was larger and more interesting than before, that my work had more point and was more worth while. It made me feel that I belonged to a living community that had one great aim to which all efforts were directed, and which gave a general significance to every individual life. I felt exhilarated by this consciousness, happy even in the darkest hours of the war, happier, in a way, than I had ever been. There were hardships; there was danger and fear, but behind all that there was a great sustaining sense of solidarity and a faith that gave one courage and hope and drove out all feeling of isolation or purposelessness from the individual life. And from the depth of this feeling came the conviction that this was the way of salvation for the world, not only in war, but also in peace and permanently, and that the war would have been largely fought in vain if when victory was won this integration of society, whether on the national or the international plane, was to be undone, and the individual was to revert to his old isolation and futility. Yet all around, the Democratic leaders and the propaganda agencies of the United Nations were proclaiming that the war was being fought for individual liberty and the sovereign independence of all nations. True they also spoke of the need for unity and co-operation after the war, but the emphasis was all on individualism and independence. I felt that this was wrong and misleading. These were the slogans on which the last war had been fought, the obsolete principles on which the world had again foundered between the two wars, and it was deplorable that they should be proclaimed as the ideals of this war. As I saw it, this war would not be worth fighting if it was merely to restore the individualist principle of 19th century society, a principle which, it seemed to me, nothing could restore as an effective basis for a progressive world. As I saw

it, the whole curse of contemporary civilization lay in the excessive individualism which both men and nations claimed as a right and cultivated as a cult in a world which had come to demand integration as the condition not only of survival but of happiness. A great deal of mischief arose from the fact that this kind of anarchical individualism was equated with the amount of liberty necessary for happiness and progress in the world of to-day. It was obvious that what men needed to be free in this world, free from want, free from fear, free from loneliness and frustration and futility, free from selfishness and cynicism and the horror of a growing belief in the meaninglessness of life, was not individualism and independence of each other, but attachment to each other and the pursuit of a common social purpose, seen as a great ideal, expressed in a plan in which everybody would take pride and play a conscious part.

The war was a Plan. The Peace must be made a Plan, and the rebuilding of the world, and the lives of all the nations and of all human society. Not a Plan in the head of a few politicians, or piled up in a file of blue prints, but a living reality that should enter the consciousness of all men and women. A Plan, national and regional and world wide, free from the curse of the domination and exploitation of one individual by another and one group by another, aiming at the welfare of the people everywhere and mobilizing as for a great crusade the energies and the idealism of the people against poverty and ignorance and squalor and disease. A Plan with a purpose to which a man could give his final loyalty.

EPILOGUE

SINCE the last chapter of this book was written the Arab League has come into being and the war in Europe to an end. During the next few months and years the whole question of the future relations of the Arab world with the West, and particularly with Britain, will have to be decided, and on that decision much depends. At the end of the last war a grave injustice was done to the Arabs and a disastrous policy initiated because, among other things, vital decisions were taken lightheartedly, either in ignorance of the facts, or in sheer defiance of them and of the warnings given by sober and well-informed advisers. One such adviser, to my knowledge, told the British Government, after making a three months' study (which he had been officially commissioned to do) of Arab feeling and Arab opinion in Palestine in 1918, that if Britain wanted to carry out the Balfour promise she would have to use the bayonets and machine-guns of some twenty or thirty thousand British troops permanently stationed in Palestine. Nor was he alone in expressing this opinion. Every honest and well-informed person who was in a position to advise the British Government, every friend of England in the Arab world, every believer in the need for Anglo-Arab friendship, said the same thing. All their information and all their advice was disregarded.

Another mistake which proved equally disastrous was that vital and irreconcilable decisions, concerning the Arab world, were taken separately, each in a special context of immediate need, by authorities all representing the British Government but acting without any co-ordination and often without any knowledge of each other's activities and commitments.

The only specific excuse that can be adduced for these mistakes (apart from the general fact that Britain as a world power has such a multitude of diverse interests and obligations that it is often impossible to reconcile them honestly, especially under the stress of war exigencies) is that Britain's relations with the Arab world were still new, and that despite the information and advice available to the British Government, it failed to understand the real character and strength of the Arab movement. That excuse, after the abundant experience of the last twenty-five years, no longer exists. The mistakes of 1919 stand out unmistakably demonstrated; the solution, to anybody who knows the facts and has the honesty of mind to accept them, is obvious, and it is one which both morality and expediency urgently demand.

Many of these mistakes, it is true, have already been admitted and to a large extent corrected. Palestine apart, the independence of all the Arab countries placed under tutelage at the end of the last war

has now been recognized in principle and substantially realized in practice. It only remains for this practical realization to become complete, but this is an essential part of the solution, and it must be fulfilled genuinely and generously. Any attempt (such as that now being made by France) to retain disguised control over an Arab state whose independence has been recognized would be resented and resisted. The Arabs have reached the last stages of impatience with the ingenious but now all too transparent formulae of post-1919 Imperialism, formulae which leave the substance of things unchanged while merely juggling with their names. They are tired of seeing the wolf merely changing from one lambskin into another. They desire to be absolutely independent, or (since absolute independence is impossible save for the biggest and most powerful nations, if then) at least as independent as any of the smaller states of Europe. No genuine friendship or co-operation between the West and the Arab world is possible unless this fact is realized and acted upon by Britain and France.

Together with independence, the Arabs desire unity. It was as one integrated community that they achieved their great civilization twelve hundred years ago; and they have retained their oneness ever since. Even when the Arab empire passed away and Arab civilization decayed, the Arab community remained, held together by a common speech, a common religion—in the case of the majority—and a traditional way of life inherited from a civilization that had belonged to them all. It survived four centuries of subjection and slumber under Ottoman rule, and finally awoke to a new and exhilarating sense of its existence in the 19th century. Deeply conscious of their oneness and of their great past as one people, the Arabs fought in the last war for freedom and unity. They obtained neither immediately, and on a long-range view of things, the blow to their unity was more damaging than the temporary withholding of independence. The barriers with which Britain and France divided them at that moment were new and artificial, but they have tended to become real with the passage of time. In each new Arab state attention was focussed on the question of independence and the immediate problem of its own relations with the Mandatory Power. Vested interests and local allegiances, dynasties and ruling groups arose, and it became impossible for the moment to think of a complete fusion of all these countries in one state. The desire for unity, however, persisted and, among the more far-sighted Arab statesmen in the different countries, increased in proportion to the danger of these centrifugal forces. Something, it was felt, had to be done to arrest this process of division and put the Arab world back on the road to unity. The experience of twenty years had shown that as long as that world was divided into a number of small states, politically impotent and economically unreal, it could neither achieve

the real independence it desired nor realize the economic possibilities which, as a unit, it possessed. Hence the Arab League; a league of independent sovereign states which have bound themselves to co-operate closely in all matters of common concern, with a view to safeguarding their independence, strengthening the natural ties that exist between the Arab countries and promoting the cultural and economic development of the Arab world conceived as a unit. The League does not realize the ideal of Arab Unity, but it does two things which, apart from their immediate benefit, will help to bring about a closer union in time: it reaffirms and symbolizes the oneness of the Arab world against the separatist forces introduced into it in 1919, and creates, what the Arabs have lacked since the disruption of their empire, machinery for common action. It is nothing revolutionary or artificial, but the first step on the way back to an old and natural unity, without which the Arabs feel they cannot take their place in the world as a useful community in the human family.

This should be firmly grasped for any correct understanding of the part played by the British Government in sponsoring the League. The Arab Union is not a British invention designed to serve Britain's own ends. It is first and foremost a genuinely Arab affair conceived by the Arabs themselves in their own true interests and striven for, often in opposition to British policy, since before the last war. It was demanded by the Arabs at the end of the last war, but denied them. If Britain has now given the movement her blessings and welcomed the formation of the League, it is merely because (apart from any chivalrous motives she may have had) she has decided that she has more to gain by swimming with the stream of Arab aspirations than against it. It is a wise and healthy decision.

There remains the problem of Palestine, and this is where it is essential that the British people and their Government should thoroughly understand both the facts and the Arab point of view. An epilogue to an autobiography is not the place for an adequate exposition of either. The dominant facts of the position, however, are: (i) that, according to every known criterion in reason or equity, Palestine is and has been for thirteen hundred years an Arab country and an essential part of the Arab world, (ii) that neither its own Arab population (consisting of 1,200,000 indigenous, sedentary inhabitants, rooted in its soil) nor the peoples of the surrounding Arab countries will ever acquiesce in its being torn away from them and converted into a Zionist state; or in the Jews ever becoming the majority in it, which would amount to the same thing, (iii) that with the coming of the Arab League into being, the concern of the Arab states in the fate of Palestine has acquired an organ through which to make itself effectively felt. The League has not only espoused the cause of Palestine. It has associated Palestine with it as a potentially independent Arab

state, by itself nominating a Palestinian Arab to sit on its council; (iv) that in the Arab view, the British White Paper of 1939, putting a final limit on Jewish immigration, restricting the sale of lands to Jews and promising self-government in ten years would, if genuinely implemented, provide the minimum basic conditions of a tolerable settlement; and that any attempt to depart from the terms of the White Paper would be regarded as a fresh betrayal and have the most deplorable consequences.

The fate of Palestine is thus the decisive factor which more than any other will determine the course of Anglo-Arab relations in the years to come. Britain has granted Egypt and Iraq their independence, and has helped Syria and the Lebanon to realize theirs. She has also, in so far as it lay in her power, helped the Arab states to achieve a form of union. For all this the Arabs are grateful to her and the moment is very propitious for initiating a new era of friendship and mutual help between her and the Arabs, on a footing of equality. That this would be in the truest interests of both, nobody who has at all reflected on the matter can doubt. Britain has vital interests in the Middle East, economic and strategic interests which in the long run only Arab friendship and the peaceful stabilization of the Arab world can guarantee. The Arabs, for their part, need help and advice from the West and would not only welcome it, particularly from Britain, but even seek it, once their major grievances were redressed, their *amour propre* as young nations new to the dignity of independence satisfied, and they became convinced that help would not bring it domination or exploitation.

But much more than the advantageous exchange of material benefits depends on Anglo-Arab friendship; nothing less, in fact, than the whole question of what will be the Arab world's final attitude towards the West and Western civilization, and whether this attitude will be negative or positive, with all that this implies for the future peace and harmony of the Mediterranean basin. In this basin fifty to sixty million Arabs live in the closest geographical and economic relation to Europe; in fact they belong to the world of Europe, and for their own sake and the sake of Europe they and the Europeans must adapt themselves to each other and be gradually integrated in a cultural and spiritual synthesis. For this they must learn to understand each other. In particular the Arabs need to understand Western civilization and assimilate its fundamentals. Many of them have already done or are doing so. Many more want to do it and would do it were they not held back by an emotional resistance arising from their unpleasant political relationship with the West. That relationship has till now been mainly a relationship of power, offensive in form to the Arab and often injurious in substance to his interests. Only when it changes completely into one of equality and friendship expressed in an honest

respect by the European for his rights and feelings, will the Arab become truly receptive to the message of Western civilization.

Already there is a big change for the better. The only major problem still outstanding between Britain and the Arab world is Palestine, but it alone is enough to poison the future if not solved in a manner tolerable to the Arabs. If it is so solved every serious obstacle that has stood till now in the way of goodwill and co-operation between Britain and the Arabs will have been removed.

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